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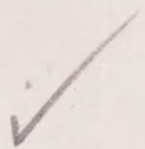




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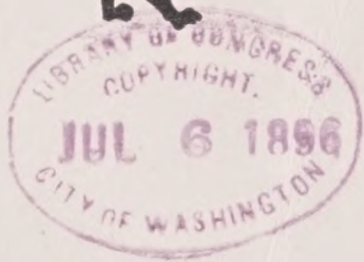
"HELENE."

A NOVEL



BY ERNEST H. HEINRICHS.

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PREFACE.

It seems somewhat inconsistent for a person to intentionally perpetrate evil and apologize for it afterward ; yet we find in the preface of most stories of to-day, an apology on the part of the author, for inflicting himself upon the reader. Of course there is no denying that in many cases the apology is not out of place, and it would have been better for suffering humanity if the cause for the apology had never existed.

In the present instance the writer has no such qualms of conscience. This story has been written at the request of a dear friend, who is one of its chief characters. Convinced of my inability for the task, I made all kind of objections, but to no avail. Still I was firmly convinced that I would eventually show my friend the mistake of his notion, when to my deep sorrow and dismay, he died before I was able to cause him to change his mind. Of course he died fully believing that I would carry out his wish, and to that fact this story owes its publicity. Sooner than break faith with the dead, I would dare anything, and while I am thoroughly aware, that I am more in need of the indulgence of the reader, than most persons who write for the public, I am willing for the sake of friendship to assume the responsibility for whatever shortcomings may be found in the following pages.

E. H. H.

PITTSBURG, MAY 30th.

"HELENE."

CHAPTER I.

It was in 1849.

Several European countries had only recently emerged from a revolution, which, while it had been successfully squelched—albeit not without some material benefit to the revolutionists; its immediate consequences left these countries still in a state of ferment. The dissatisfaction among the lower classes, which had been going on for many years, directed against all existing forms of government, had at last in 1848 broken out into an open revolt under conditions, undoubtedly very favorable to their cause.

There had been many revolutions in the old world before this, but they had been principally confined to French soil, in fact, as everyone knows, a revolution in France is a very common occurrence. In 1848, however, the staid and phlegmatic German was at last aroused to assert himself and demand some of the rights, which an overbearing aristocracy had monopolized for centuries. Students of the people of Germany and their history have often expressed wonder that a race so sturdy, so strong and so enlightened should not have long ago shaken off the oppressive yoke of a government, which had two kinds of law, one for the aristocracy and the other for the people. The explanation is contained in the simple words: "Loyalty to custom."

The German is of an eminently conservative nature. He may emigrate from the Fatherland, find a new home anywhere, but he will stick to the habits and manners of his forefathers for a long time to come. This fact is nowhere more strikingly illustrated than among the Germans in this country.

It was this loyalty to custom among the people, that worked in favor of the aristocracy in Germany and prevented the outbreak of a rebellion. The existence of cause for complaint had manifested itself many times and very plainly. The people had realized, years and years ago, the oppressive tyranny of the aristocracy, they had frequently smarted under the whip. Yet, because these conditions had

been their lot from earliest recollection, every new generation, though it felt the yoke more keenly, refrained from shaking off the shackles, which their forefathers had borne before them. It had become a custom to them, and they were loyal to it. Naturally the class, which was enjoying supremacy, fostered this idea as much as possible, in order to maintain the upper hand the longer. Hence the line of demarkation between the commoners and the aristocrats was nowhere more sharply drawn than in Germany. The difference was like a gulf that seemed to be unbridgeable. In order to give the lower class a better realization of their own inferiority, aristocracy affected a position of distinction that barred even the most remote approach. For a long time the nobles of Germany actually disowned the language of their own country, and spoke nothing but French. This was done to imitate royalty and display their vast superiority over the bourgeoisie.

Still, while the pitcher may go to the well for a long time, its career is bound to end. The feeling of discontent that had been rankling in the bosom of the people for so long had to break out some time, and there seemed to be no better opportunity than the present.

France and Germany were both ruled by monarchs unequal to the responsibility of governing people, and they were absolutely devoid of a single qualification, that characterizes men as rulers. To make matters worse they had also the misfortune of lacking able counsel—men with ability to direct the reins of government for which their masters had not the least fitness. The outcome of it was that in France the king had to leave his throne, a republic was declared and Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, a nephew of Napoleon the First, called to the presidential chair of the newly created government.

In Germany the Royalists had been more fortunate. The king was not forced to abdicate, but the people gained the splendid victory of compelling the monarchy to establish a constitutional government and create two Houses of Parliament. While this was a long way from what the most rabid of the revolutionists expected, it was nevertheless a very creditable achievement. It meant the abolition of a regime of autocracy, the most disgraceful form of government for any civilized country.

Of course with the declaration of the constitution the country did not jump into a condition of general peace at a

bound. Anarchists, Communists and extreme Socialists were still as much dissatisfied as ever, and although the more reasonable element of the people, appreciating the value of their victory, were content, there was still an internal agitation going on. Germany was like a smouldering fire, and the least fanning would have caused a fresh outbreak of the flames of revolution. It required constant watchfulness, energetic action, and the greatest rigor on the part of the government to prevent this, and for over a year the country was in a state of mobilization.

To make matters even worse, Germany was also forever threatened from France. It was argued at Berlin, and with what justification subsequent events have shown, that the French would invade Germany on the least provocation, and now, since a Napoleon was again holding the helm of government, this dread of hostilities seemed to have a more realistic foundation than ever.

In order, therefore, to be prepared for an emergency, Germany concentrated in 1849 the cream of its military forces on the Western frontier. The countries along the Rhine were practically one large barracks, Wesel, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Coblenz and Mayence were the points for the different headquarters. The last named city, owing to its situation at the confluence of the Rhine and Main, often called the key of the Western gate into Germany, especially, was filled with soldiers of all arms. Detachments of infantry and cavalry, light and heavy, were found here, and Mayence was completely in the hands of the military. The regular inhabitants were very much pleased with their uninvited guests, because they added considerable liveliness to the usual humdrum, every day existence of the place. They also brought, and this made them especially welcome, money into the pockets of merchants and storekeepers.

Among the different detachments was one regiment of infantry, the Thirty-ninth, which enjoyed the peculiar distinction of counting in its ranks the handsomest man in the Prussian army. This was Karl Junker, a private in the Eighth company. Apart from his looks, which by the way had caused him to be called "The Apollo of the Barracks," Junker was a young fellow, generally liked and respected by his comrades. He had not many associates among the soldiers, in fact there were but two. These two had been his schoolmates, friends of his boyhood days. They were all three about the same

age, and being drafted into the army, were enlisted into the same regiment and into the same company. Outside these two, Junker held no terms of intimacy with anyone. He was of a retiring disposition, which, being of natural origin, and not resultant from presumptuous affectation, or an idea that he considered himself above his fellows, because he was goodlooking, made him the more popular. He never allowed his prepossessing appearance to get the better of his modesty, and in consequence everyone had a good word for "The Apollo."

Junker's home was in the Rhenish provinces, where his father had the reputation of being a well-to-do farmer. He had received an excellent education, studied law, and if he had chosen, might have entered the army under far more advantageous conditions than as a simple private. It was on this point his friends considered him peculiar, an opinion, for the justification of which he furnished another reason, when he repeatedly refused to accept any military promotion or preferment offered him. To all propositions of that kind he replied good humoredly, but firmly:

"As a private I have entered the army, and as a private I want to leave when my time expires."

In appearance Junker was the ideal personification of youthful manhood; tall; of course, just below six feet and straight as a dart. He carried himself with an easy grace and an air of noble distinction, he had fair hair and his features presented the perfection of regularity; Wherever it was, whether by himself or with others, he surely attracted the attention and admiration of everyone observing him. He had an expression in his eyes and in his face, that seemed to exercise a mesmeric influence over those he came in contact with. There was something about him, not to be described nor defined, which appeared to cast a spell, making those who came within the charmed circle, his friends and worshippers. Karl himself, and perhaps that was his greatest characteristic, seemed to be wholly unconscious of the effects his appearance produced, and he was ever the same modest young man without swagger or ostentatation.

There was a great deal of sameness in the life of the soldiers garrisoned in Mayence at this period. The officers especially seemed to be chafing under the irksomeness of their monotonous existence. All efforts to enliven the everyday routine of doing nothing were constant and manifold,

There had already been a surfeit of balls, concerts and parties of all kinds and description ; but even amusements grow stale, unless they are varied. All resources appeared to have been exhausted, when suddenly the idea of horse-racing and sharpshooting suggested itself, and the scheme finding general endorsement as a very excellent one, the plans for its speedy execution were immediately prepared.

No sooner had the arrangements been completed, the horses selected, the riders named, the prizes settled upon, when the day for the races was fixed. Everything promised a festival of no mean pretensions and of great success. For the sharpshooting contest there were many entries, even a number of the sedate young men of Mayence had been induced to meet the military in friendly rivalry before the target.

At last the grand day arrived. The weather was unusually fine for the season of the year. The town was decked out in flags and bunting from every store and residence. In the morning the different military bands made a procession through the principal streets, followed by a long string of carriages occupied by the officers, who were to ride in the races, and the sharpshooters. The first race was set to begin at 2 o'clock, but long before the hour arrived almost the entire population of the city and neighborhood assembled on the course, which had been laid out for the purpose on a large meadow in the vicinity.

All the soldiers, with the exception of those who had to remain in the barracks on guard duty, or for similar important reasons, had been given permission to take in the fete, and as by a coincidence, Karl Junker, as well as his two friends Frederick and Phillip were at liberty, they all decided to go and enjoy themselves with the rest.

When they reached the scene of the festivities, the first race was already in progress. It was not an easy matter to get through such a crowd as surrounded the track, but these agile young men without much difficulty succeeded in gaining a favorable position.

In the grand stand was to be seen all the elite of Mayence ; the officers of the different detachments of military and their ladies, the Burgomaster and his wife, all the members of councils with their families and every one else of prominence was represented.

Junker, whose height gave him the advantage of looking over the heads of those around him, cast a glance at the occupants of the grand stand, and he was surprised at the large number of ladies he observed.

"By the way," he said, turning around to his friends, "did you not tell me, that a beautiful young lady is to distribute the trophies to the winners in the different contests?"

"Yes, that is right," replied Frederick, "Lady Helene von Cannstatt, the youngest daughter of General von Cannstatt, but of course you know her?"

"No, I do not!"

"She is the sister-in-law of our colonel."

"Let me see," said Phillip, "I have often looked at her admiringly, and I think I am able to recognize her among a thousand ladies," and making another attempt to break through the crowd, he succeeded, Junker following close behind him.

"There Karl," said Phillip, when he again looked over the rows of many handsomely dressed ladies, "the fifth lady in the lower row of seats, is Fraeulein von Cannstatt. The one with the pink flowers in her hat."

"Ah yes, I see now," replied Junker with his eyes directed to the place indicated by his friend; and his gaze still fixed on the same spot, he continued: "I envy the winners in these races, not for the prizes they obtain, but for having them bestowed by such a charming lady."

"And I agree with you," remarked Phillip, "because I do believe she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and they say, that she is as good as she is beautiful."

While they were indulging in this eulogy of the young lady, there was a commotion in the crowd around them, and in the distance arose sounds of shrieking and yelling, that seemed to bring terror into the hearts of everybody who heard it.

"What is that? What can that noise mean?"—these and many other questions were hurriedly uttered on all sides.

"That does not sound as if the winner was being cheered or the racers encouraged to increase their efforts; what is it that can have happened?" Someone in the crowd had made this remark, and even while he was yet speaking, an explanation of the noise appeared in the distance. A horse came tearing down the track around the bend in the

course, running at a maddening gallop. There was no rider on the animal's back, but as it came nearer, a human form was recognized being dragged along over the ground with head down and one foot in a stirrup. The sight was horrifying and the sickening spectacle created a panic among the crowd. appalled with terror, some women shrieked, while others fainted and as for the men, those who had not completely lost their heads used their presence of mind by yelling to the people to keep back and fly for their lives.

Junker, and his two friends had noticed the horse immediately after it had come around the corner, and as the riderless racer came nearer they realized the awfulness of the situation at a glance. Young, strong as they all three were, fear for themselves was foreign to their nature, clear-headed, and, as good soldiers accustomed to brave any kind of danger, their minds at once became active in thinking as to what might be done to stop the crazed animal, rescue its rider and prevent a dangerous catastrophe.

"If that horse is not stopped," said Phillip, "before it gets to the end of the course, it will surely kill some of the people."

"Oh, what would I not give for my gun this moment" that I might shoot that mad brute!" suggested Frederick, while Junker stood there, motionless, like a statue, his eye on the rapidly approaching horse, dragging its former rider behind. All at once an idea seemed to have entered his mind, and turning around to his friends, he said:

"I am going to stop that horse," and even while he uttered these words, he jumped forward into the race course.

Most of the people, awakened from the stupor, which had at first overcome them, were moving backward from the course, as rapidly as the density of the crowd would permit, but when it was noticed that a young man boldly entered the track apparently to meet his death beneath the horses feet, the unexpectedness of this spectacle made everyone halt and await the consequences of the most obviously foolhardy undertaking they had ever beheld.

In the meantime Karl was quickly walking towards the middle of the course. His eyes had not left the approaching animal one second, in fact he had watched and followed every one of its movements, while it came flying

along like possessed with furies. Evidently thinking he had arrived on the spot where the horse was sure to pass, he stood still and awaiting its approach, the young soldier divested himself of his cap and his coat, then he unbuttoned his belt, from which he drew his short sabre. Holding the blade between his teeth, he rolled up the sleeves of his shirt. Of course this had all taken place quicker than it takes time to tell it, and now—Junker stood there like the most magnificent gladiator that ever entered the arena. Quick though he had been, there was no time for him to spare. In the next second, the horse was almost abreast of him. This was apparently the moment Junker had been expecting; for as the evidently maddened animal came snorting and puffing along, now rearing on its hind legs, as if ready to force out of its way the obstructing young man with the sharpness and strength of its fore-limbs, Karl, with the sabre in his right, stooped down like one sees a cat crouch when about to spring upon its prey. Then the young man jumped forward and lunged his weapon into the breast of the animal. He must have exercised every muscle of his body when he inflicted that wound and no doubt his aim was unerring. No sooner had the steel been driven into his body, than the horse, after a few frantic plunges fell to the ground, a corpse.

It was a marvellous feat the young man had accomplished. It required a steady nerve, a quick eye, an accurate aim and the strength of a Samson, but Junker was evidently endowed with all. After the horse had once fallen it never again moved a muscle. Karl immediately turned his attention to the young man who lay there an unrecognizable mass of flesh and bones. He unfastened his foot from the stirrup and laid him upon the soft grass. By this time, the crowd, who had witnessed the brave, heroic deed of Junker, returned to the field, and everyone endeavored to get near enough to take hold of him by the hand, or tender him some words of praise for what he had done. This display of approval for what he had considered merely an act of duty caused the young fellow to hurry away to the barracks as quickly as possible. He was followed, however, all the way by the admiring masses, who cheered to the echo—until his tall, handsome figure disappeared behind the barrack gate.

CHAPTER II.

Not long after the sensational incident of the runaway race horse had taken place, the scene of the festival was wrapped in complete gloom. What in the morning had looked so favorable for a day of unusual pleasure and enjoyment ended in the greatest disappointment to the officers who had arranged the fete, and to the people who had gone to watch the games, while at least one family was cast into the deepest grief and sorrow. This was the home of the unfortunate young man, who had been killed in such a horrible manner. The rider of the maddened animal was the son of one of the prominent merchants of the city, and recognized as one of the best amateur horsemen in the province. The cause of the accident remained for ever an inexplicable affair. The other riders, probably because they had their minds and hands full, looking after their own horses, could not throw the least light upon the occurrence, and of course, the spectators were far less in a position to advance any theory for its explanation.

It was perhaps owing to the obscurity surrounding the cause of the sad accident, which offered so little opportunity for interesting gossip, that the heroic intervention of young Junker became the subject of general attention, and that night the name of "The Apollo of the Barracks" was in everybody's mouth.

Upon leaving the race course, the young man hurriedly returned to his quarters in the barracks. Entering the company's messroom he found his two friends surrounded by a large crowd of soldiers, who listened very attentively to Frederick's version of the recent occurrence. His advent into the room seemed to have been unobserved, and as he heard his friends describing the part he had taken, in the most glowing terms, Junker was about to modestly withdraw into a corner by himself, when his presence became noticed. It was the signal for a spontaneous ovation. The boys nearly fell over each other in their eagerness to shake him by the hand and overwhelm him with congratulations upon his heroic deed. Karl quietly disclaimed any right to be called a hero, but his friends asserted, that he allowed modesty to overshadow good judgment. Then he was urged to tell them the details of the incident in his own words, and though

objecting to this for a long time, he gave in at last. He had not proceeded, however, very far, when Frederick interrupted him and turning toward the crowd, said:

"He is diverting the truth to belittle himself, don't listen to him, let me tell you how it happened."

This interruption caused a general uproar, during which Junker succeeded in slipping from the room without being observed.

"I am glad to have escaped so easily," he thought, "no doubt they all mean well, but to hear one's praises sung, because one performs a simple act of human kindness, becomes nauseating. I will take a walk out in the open, where nobody knows me, and I won't return until bedtime, so as not to hear any more about the affair."

He had walked along and arrived in the front of Colonel Von Wuesthoff's residence when the door opened, and Junker found himself face to face with Fraeulein Von Cannstatt, the beautiful young lady he had noticed in the front seat of the grand stand at the race course. The soldier instinctively raised his hand to his cap and saluted her in true military style. He stood still to let the lady pass him, when she also stopped and addressed him.

"Are you not the young man who so bravely killed the maddened horse at the fete this afternoon?" she asked.

Junker was amazed, not because he seemed to be haunted by recollections of that little adventure of his, but because this young lady spoke to him. And it certainly was an unheard of thing. He was a common soldier, and she the daughter of a general, a lady belonging to one of the foremost families of nobility in the country. As far as his experience had gone, members of the aristocracy, and especially young ladies, never spoke to men like him, except in tones of command. He had never known of an instance where one of them deigned to address a private soldier in the street. In this experience Junker was indeed not alone, and it is not to be wondered at that he should have been for a moment dumfounded. But he quickly recovered himself and replied:

"At your service, my lady. I am the man who killed the horse, though I cannot lay claim to the distinction of bravery you so generously attribute to me."

"Oh!" with a smile. "Now I notice that you are not

only brave, but also modest, which is certainly very refreshing to find in a young man."

Junker did not answer, but bowed his acknowledgement to this compliment. The lady, however, had also noticed other characteristics about the soldier, though she did not express her opinion upon them, or it is safe to say she would very soon have made him blush. As Fraeulein Von Cannstatt observed his fine handsome figure, the perfect cast of his features, the noble, distinguished carriage, in spite of the ordinary uniform of the common soldier, and above all, his language as well as manner of speech, the lady felt an interest awaken in her towards this young soldier, that caused her to continue the conversation in order to find out more about him.

"The occurrence of this afternoon has impressed itself very strongly on my mind," she remarked at last, "and since it is but natural to associate you with the incident, I should like to know your name."

"At your service, my lady. I am Karl Junker, private in the Eighth Company, Thirty-ninth Regiment of infantry."

"I am delighted to hear it, my brother-in-law is colonel of your regiment. I have just left my sister, who, as you are probably aware, lives here, and I am now on my way home, where the colonel would undoubtedly have taken me had he not been absent, but since you are one of his soldiers, I shall be glad if you will kindly act as his substitute."

This proposition was made so unexpectedly, it caused Karl to be greatly surprised, yet he was careful not to show what he thought when he replied:

"At your service, my lady."

With these words the young man stepped aside, giving the lady an opportunity to precede him. This appeared, however, not to conform at all with the wishes of Fraeulein Von Cannstatt, who no doubt, divining his purpose, remarked:

"There is not the least occasion for this formality, in fact, I do not like it."

"Pardon me, my lady, but—

"I understand what you want to say. You are a private soldier, and I am a general's daughter, hence we must behave towards each other according to the requirements of our different stations. I prefer to meet and talk with people on the ground of equality. As you know, I happened to

be at the race course this afternoon, and was one of the witnesses to your heroic conduct there. The thought came to me then that I should like to meet and express my admiration for the man who so bravely held at bay that maddened animal by endangering his own life. This was the reason I addressed you just now as you approached. It is an honor for anybody, and especially for a woman to be in the society of a brave man, and when I asked you to accompany me I appreciated your acquiescence as a compliment, not as a service."

"Your ladyship honors me beyond my deserts," replied Karl, as they walked together down the street. For some time after, silence reigned between them, until Fraeulein Von Cannstatt again opened the conversation by questioning the young soldier about his home, his family, his youth and his life in the army, apparently evincing a very lively interest in all Junker had to say about himself. Suddenly the lady stopped before the gate of a beautiful mansion enclosed by a miniature park of trees, shrubs and flowering bushes.

"Here I am at home, Herr Junker, and I feel greatly indebted for your kindness. Good by, and I trust we shall meet again," the next moment she disappeared.

For a long time Karl stood there without moving. To all appearances he was thoroughly bewildered, his eyes were gazing searchingly up the path leading towards the house, and it was but all too evident that the object, which they failed to discern, occupied his thoughts completely.

The sun's last rays, the golden messengers of approaching darkness, sent their farewell glimmers over the distant hills. Then twilight came in all its indistinctness, weaving the web of dusk and gloom into a sombre cloth, which gradually descended upon the earth, and covered it with the mantle of night. During this entire period, Junker had not gone away from the spot, where Fraeulein Von Cannstatt had wished him adieu. The neighborhood was a quiet one, and whatever arrested the faculty of his motion there seemed to be nobody to disturb him. At last the influence, which kept him rooted to the spot for so long must have let go its hold. He turned his back upon the gate and retraced his steps toward the barracks, but his heart was full to overflowing, and the pent up feelings must find utterance.

"This has been the most eventful day of my life," he murmured, "I have been fortunate in preventing a disaster that might have caused the loss of a number of lives, and I have also lost my own heart. I love that young lady as woman was never loved before. How beautiful she is, and how gracious her manner; how lofty and noble her sentiments and how absolutely devoid of all haughtiness and aristocratic pride. This walk has been to me like a beautiful dream, the memory of which will linger with me through the whole of my life. Yes, a dream, which I am afraid it is destined to remain, for who has ever heard of a man from the people, like myself, a mere private soldier, to fall in love with a daughter of the aristocracy and have his love returned. Ah well, after all, I am not sorry to have met this lovely lady, even if it was only to lose her. My time—hello! who in the world have we here?"

And he might well ask, because Junker had almost fallen over the prostrate form of a man, who was lying directly in his path. It was a very dark night, the young soldier had been going along engrossed by his own thoughts and indifferent to all surroundings, when he met with this obstruction to his progress. He stumbled for a moment, but quickly regained his balance, then stooped over the object on the ground, to see who it might be.

"Good gracious, he exclaimed, it is a soldier—an officer—it is our colonel, and he is dead drunk!"

This was an extraordinary discovery to make, and for a moment Junker staggered in contemplation of the awful sight before him. It is not pleasant for any soldier to surprise his superior officer in such an unenviable condition as drunkenness. The chances are, the officer, constantly realizing that he must have sunk in the estimation of a person before whom he should always maintain perfect dignity, will seek to enforce the respect, which he imagines to have lost. The young man was of a far seeing mind and knowing the colonel so well, he began to wish the discovery had not been his. The officer was just now in danger of being killed, murdered or robbed, and Junker would not have left him so for anything in the world. The next question was what to do with him. He was about to lift him off the ground and place him on his feet, when Herr Von Wuesthoff opened his eyes, he muttered some inarticulate words and then looked at Junker in a vacant stare. Evidently rec-

ognizing a soldier before him, he drew himself up, as well as his condition would allow, and endeavored to walk. The young man maintained a discreet silence. Drawing the colonel's arm through his, he held him with all his might and thus succeeded in piloting him along the street. Fortunately, the distance to his residence was not very great, and soon they arrived at the officer's quarters. By this time Von Wuesthoff appeared to have sufficiently recovered to retain his equilibrium. As Junker stood there carefully watching whether he might safely take his departure, the colonel gave him another stare. The look was not a pleasant one, and the soldier felt inclined to leave the man, who showed so little appreciation for what he had done. Still he determined to see him safely in his own house. In the meantime the colonel had opened the door, and as the key clicked in the lock, he turned around to the young man.

"Ma—ma-rch " he hiccoughed, pointing with his hand down the street, and Karl, saluting, turned on his heel and walked to the barracks.

CHAPTER III.

Junker had taken the measure of his colonel's character correctly. The latter, though intoxicated, had not failed to recognize the young man, and the very thought of having been found in such a condition by one of his own men, caused Von Wuesthoff to nurture a feeling of deepest hatred against the private soldier, who now became the constant target for his ill-humor. The very sight of Junker had upon him the effect of flaunting a red rag in a bull's face. This, for the simple reason, no doubt, that the young soldier was to the colonel like a looking glass, in which he always saw the reflection of his own disgrace.

Karl upon going home after he had left the officer at his door, wisely decided not to speak of the occurrence to anybody. Personal pride and his self-respect prompted him to desist from hawking about a story, which would only militate against the honor of the regiment, as Von Wuesthoff was its colonel. But Junker was also a gentleman by instinct, and the "esprit du corp," remarkable in all Ger-

man soldiers, was very strongly developed in him. It was therefore, surprising that the colonel, who should have been familiar with these phases of the young man's character, treated him as he did. But Wuesthoff was of a low minded, brutal and coarse nature, who considered an army of soldiers like so many cattle. He recognized them not as men who might be possessed with fine feelings and noble sentiments. His conception of authority was to rule with a rod of iron, and he sought to keep his subordinates in subjection by making himself feared, the result being he was generally detested and more disliked than any other man in the army. He was convinced that Junker had apprised the whole regiment of what he had seen, and as open punishment would have been a confession on his part, the colonel resorted to the weapon of humiliating the young man before his comrades.

Under these circumstances, it was very trying for Junker to bear his colonel's malice, and he found his only consolation in the fact, that the time for his discharge was not very far off. He resigned himself with a feeling of sublime philosophy, and indeed it was the only thing he could do, because there were no means within his reach to check his superior officer in his petty spitefulness. Such were the conditions in the German army then, and it is little better now, more is the pity.

The treatment Junker received at the hand of the colonel was a perfect enigma to the whole regiment, because Karl was a soldier against whom no one could say ought, hence, it occasioned considerable speculation among his comrades.

There were, however, many moments when the dark clouds overshadowing the existence of the young man showed a silver lining, and this happened whenever he met Fraeulein Von Cannstatt, an event, which of late was not remarkable for the rarity of its occurrence. By some peculiar coincidence, whenever the young lady went into town to see her sister, the Lady Von Wuesthoff, she was sure to come across the handsome young soldier, and while it was at first the lady, who took the initiative in opening the conversation, it must be admitted, that after a very short time, Junker seemed to take it as a matter of course to meet Lady Von Cannstatt and take her home.

Junker was quite aware that he was foolishly adding fuel to the fire which already raged within his breast, although he felt convinced that his passion would never reach the desired goal, he seemed to be satisfied. To be walking by the side of the girl he adored, to listen to the melody of her voice, to be looking at the beauty of her face was enough to drive away the cobwebs of moroseness produced by the undeserved malice of the colonel, and when the lady on one occasion held out her hand to Karl while wishing him good night at the gate of her father's mansion, the young man walked home transported into a perfect heaven of bliss.

As for the lady, there is no reason to hold back the fact any longer, that she was just as much in love with the handsome soldier, as he was with her. From the very moment she saw him on the track of the race course, her heart flew out to the young man, overleaping the barriers of birth, position, wealth and every other social difference which separated them.

Fraeulein Von Cannstatt, though she belonged to one of the oldest aristocratic families of Germany, observed a total disregard towards these rules of etiquette, which were so rigidly exercised by the German nobility. At the time we met her at the races, Helene was 18 years of age. She and her sister, the colonel's wife, were the only children of Friedrich Von Cannstatt, a Prussian general, and at this period commandant of the military forces gathered around Mayence. The general had been a widower ever since Helene had been a baby, and as the child was a winsome little thing, the father grew inordinately fond of her, so much so, that he never was so much pleased as when he had the little girl about him. He took the care of her education and her bringing up to a great extent into his own hands, and it was largely due to the liberal mind possessed in some degree by the old gentleman, that his younger daughter developed similar predilections towards radicalism. Having grown up under the tutelage of her father, who was a thorough soldier, she naturally acquired a spirit of womanly independence, which made her altogether different from other girls of her class and station. German girls are brought up and reared into the most dependent women imaginable. Before marriage they are under the strict surveillance of governesses or their moth-

ers, and their existence is spent within a limited horizon. All receive a thorough education, often of a classical nature, but usually they derive very little benefit from it. In the kitchen and among equals of their own sex learned subjects are never discussed, and in the presence of men, for a German lady to display any knowledge except that of housekeeping would seem preposterous. A married lady in aristocratic Germany scarcely ventures ever to entertain, much less maintain an opinion different from that of her husband. The husband and wife really occupy two different worlds, the smallest of which belongs to the woman, but the superiority of the man is so great, that the moment they meet, the woman bows in submissive obedience, and whatever prerogative of reigning she may have held, it is abdicated in favor of him, who is her lord. Independence she has none, except what is allowed by him, whose name she bears.

Thus it happened, that General Von Cannstatt was unwittingly the instrument of bringing up Helene and developing her into a woman, who was much the better for being so different from her German sisters. In fact it were a good thing for all girls, if they could go through a course of study, where they had an opportunity to acquire a knowledge of man's characteristics. It might be a lesson which would serve them well when they are older and compelled to cope with the cunning of the sterner sex.

However, it must be remembered, that Helene's father, in educating his daughter, had no other object in view, except to satisfy his own selfishness in not wishing to part with her. He was no pedagogue, and had he been able to foresee, that he was instilling notions of radicalism, of social equality into her head, it is safe to say, Helene would have been sent to the strictest pensionnat sooner, than suffered to remain at home. Von Cannstatt's ideas on these subjects were to him pet theories, the practical inauguration of which he would have scorned to see established. He was as proud of his nobility, his name and ancestry as ever Patrician, who strode the walls of the Roman Capitol.

CHAPTER IV.

Karl Junker one evening sat alone in the barracks. His hands were busily cleaning, burnishing and polishing his accoutrements, while his thoughts were occu-

pied with formulating schemes, plans and fancies, the pivotal figure of all which was Fraeulein Von Cannstatt. Suddenly he was interrupted in his flight of dreamy speculations by his friend Phillip.

"Here, Karl, is a letter for you, which was handed to me at the barrack gate by a flunky in livery. It is a perfumed note and the style of messenger makes it look a little suspicious. It must be a correspondent of the finest kind that can afford to employ a personal mail carrier."

Junker, without taking the least notice of his friend's remarks, took the letter and quickly opened it. Phillip watched him read, and when he noticed that his comrade's face became redder and redder as he perused line after line, he remarked:

"That must be quite an interesting epistle by the effect it has upon the color of your countenance?"

But the other did not seem to hear. Having read the note to the end, he turned back to the beginning, read it over again, finished it the second time, folded it up and put it in his pocket. All the while his eyes were rivetted to the ground in a vacant stare. At last he looked up and noticed his friend. Then, while a smile of sublime contentment settled around his lips and eyes, Junker grasped Phillip by the hand, saying:

"My dear fellow, this is the happiest day of my whole life!"

"A kind of 'rad letter day,' as it were; I am glad to hear that."

"Thank you Phil, I know you are a good fellow, even if you do make bad puns, and some other time I will tell you all about this letter."

Then he walked away to the dormitory of the barracks. Arriving at his own bed, he sat down, pulled that letter out of his pocket and again began reading it. This was its contents:

"Herr Karl Junker:

"You are no doubt aware that Jenny Lind is in Mayence, having an engagement to sing for three nights at the Opera House. I am, and always have been very fond of Jenny Lind, not because I ever heard her myself, but because I listened to her praises from those who have. Unfortunately, however, my father, with whom I have always gone to the theater, is not well enough just now to

go out at night; but as I should be loath to miss this opportunity, I come to and ask you will kindly take me to the Opera House. Unless you inform me to the contrary, I shall believe silence to mean consent, and I will be prepared for to-morrow evening, which is the night of 'Sombambula.'

"Without wishing to cause you the least inconvenience, I am

"HELENE VON CANNSTATT.

P. S. Do not come in uniform."

"I have read this letter now for the third time," mused Junker, "and yet I can scarcely believe I am grasping the facts it contains. I seem to be in a trance. Not even in my wildest dreams should I have deemed it possible that a young and beautiful lady, a real countess, would want to be seen at a theater with me, and here I am actually asked by one of them to go with her. Ah, but then Fraeulein Von Cannstatt is an exception. There is as much difference between her and the ordinary aristocratic lady, as there is between the sun and a shooting star. Yet withal, it is the most extraordinary request that was ever made to a private soldier; but to me, who loves this lady, it is a boon, the realization of which seems only a forlorn hope. Reason no doubt would advise me to refuse, though I know not how I could, and love, which knows no reason, says go, and go I will. At all events she does not dislike me, and while it will afford her pleasure to hear Jenny Lind sing, I shall be with her to enjoy the satisfaction of witnessing her delight."

Having made up his mind to go, Junker immediately set about preparing for the next evening's event. He secured leave of absence, then he went into the city and hunted up the best tailor that Mayence could boast of, whom he gave orders for a complete outfit of clothes, such as it was the custom for German gentlemen of that period to wear in the theater. He did not go to bed that night until he felt satisfied that he had completed all arrangements for as good an appearance as it was possible for him to make.

Karl left the barracks the following afternoon as soon as he was allowed, and then struck a bee-line for the tailor to undergo the metamorphosis of a soldier into a civilian. The knight of the needle, an artist in his line,

observed the handsome soldier with great admiration, and when the young man stood before him in the regulation dress suit, he gave vent to such flattering terms that might have made anyone not quite so modest as a violet vainer than a peacock. Junker left the tailor's in a carriage and drove to the Cannstatt residence.

His arrival was evidently expected here. His foot had scarcely touched the broad, marble steps of the palatial mansion, where the general and his daughter lived, when the door opened and a servant appeared, who stationed himself at the side of the entrance, awaiting Junker's approach.

"I have orders to conduct you to the blue salon, sir, where her ladyship will be pleased to have you wait for a few moments, may I beg you to follow me?" were the words with which the young soldier was received, and bowing assent, he was ushered into a room, the splendor of which almost dazzled him. But the servant had hardly left the apartment, and before Karl was able to turn around and enjoy an observation of the sumptuous elegance surrounding him, the door opened again. Helene appeared, a perfect vision of beauty. For a second, speech, breath and eyesight deserted him. By simple intuition he bowed before this, the most sublime of all pictures, a beautiful woman.

"Good evening, Herr Junker," Helene broke the silence; and coming towards him she greeted him with a smile so sweet, so bewitching, which could not help recalling the faculties of Karl from their momentary paralysis. "I am very grateful for the promptness and readiness with which you have consented to my request; but indeed I was so anxious to hear Jenny Lind, and papa not well enough to take me, I could think of no one else with whom I would sooner go than with yourself."

"I am sure your ladyship has conferred upon me an honor greater than ever I hoped to be favored with. By giving me permission to go with you to the theater you raise me to a height, to which I never, not even in my wildest dreams, dared or presumed to aspire."

"I am surprised to hear you say so."

"I am but a private soldier and you the daughter of a general."

"Ah, but you forget, that my first impression of you was that of a hero, and heroes rank far above generals."

"I am only a child of the people, merely a farmer's son."

"Yes, and what of that? I have had opportunities to discover that you possess all the characteristics, morally and intellectually of a true gentleman, in which respect you have the advantage over the average young man of nobility."

"Your ladyship is extremely kind to entertain such a good opinion of me, and I hope I shall never do anything to cause it to change."

"I am afraid you under estimate your good qualities," replied Fraeulein Von Cannstatt, smiling again. "When I met you for the first time you bravely ventured your life, so as to prevent any harm to hundreds of men, women and children. Since then I have been often enough in your society to notice that inasmuch as your conduct and intellectual attainments differ from those of the young noblemen whom I have met in our drawing room, this difference is in your favor."

It was a remarkable speech for a young lady to make to a young man, but then Helene was a remarkable girl. Had her education been entrusted to a lady imbued with the notions of German aristocracy, she certainly would not have made these remarks. But her father, the blunt and straightforward soldier, always saying what he felt, and as he felt, involuntarily and unconsciously developed that trait in his daughter to a very inordinate degree. The result was, that among the ladies of her acquaintance, Helene had earned for herself the reputation of "carrying her heart on her sleeve." The conventional lies and hypocritical nothings in vogue among young ladies of her age and station were not known to Fraeulein Von Cannstatt. She expressed her opinion of everything and everybody in accordance with the manner in which she was impressed by them. Convinced that Junker was the grandest man she knew, why should she hesitate to tell him so?

As for Karl, he had listened, while his brain was in a state of tumultuous emotions, difficult to describe. For a moment he was dazed, and the blood rushed through his veins with the wildness of a waterfall. His first thought was, that his hopes had been realized, and she loved him. Had she not made him her equal by selecting him of all men to act as her escort to the opera? But better still, had she not just now attributed to him terms of exaltation

which could not be interpreted, except, that at least in her opinion he must be the paragon of men? The joyousness of these thoughts was blissfully intoxicating, and had Karl not been so excessively modest he would have acted upon the inspiration of that moment, and declared his love, but no? In another second his mind went off on another tour of conjecturing. So fearful was he of dashing the silver cup of happiness, which he now enjoyed, that he preferred to keep it rather than venture upon the attainment of the golden one. He was about to make some remark, thanking Helene for her kind and flattering compliments, when he looked up into her eyes. It must have been that he saw courage written there in very plain letters. Falling on one knee, his hands appealingly stretched out towards her, he burst out:

"Your ladyship overwhelms me. I have no doubt it is natural for you to be gracious and kind to everybody; and if I have made the mistake of attributing your bestowal of distinctions upon me to different motives than you intended, I shall but receive the just punishment of presumptuous folly. I love you Lady Helene. You have been the idol of my thoughts, the vision of my dreams from the moment I saw you on that memorable day at the race course. It was your presence which armed me to dare the maddened horse; and I know your encouragement would prompt me to accomplish far greater feats than that. I am aware that I am unworthy of you. I cannot forget that I am a peasant, you a lady of the aristocracy. Yet after all I am but human; the same emotions, the same passions control us all, and I should be less than human, were I to know you and not to love you. Realizing the vastness of the gulf by which we are separated through the accident of birth, I repeatedly formed the resolution to subdue even the thoughts of my love for you. It was a vain endeavor. No sooner had I made an effort in that direction than its effects were immediately frustrated by some new evidence of your kindness and favor. If I have displeased you, pray forgive me, and I will leave you; however, remember, if you could see yourself with my eyes and listen to the melody of your voice with my ears, you would assuredly call my offence a pardonable one."

Helene had listened with rapturous delight, and when Junker was silent she took him by the hand and drew him

towards her. The handsome soldier kissed the cheeks, where tears of joy flowed down like drops of diamonds, while she whispered:

"I love you dearest Karl, and though you are a peasant, I am prouder of you than ever princess was of any prince or principality."

CHAPTER V.

"My lady, have you changed your mind about going out, and shall I tell Johann to put the horses back into the stable?"

It was one of the old servants of the Canstatt family venturing to interrupt the two lovers, who appeared to be totally oblivious to the rest of the world, Jenny Lind, Somnambula and everything being forgotten.

"No, Franz, I am ready," replied Helene, and taking Karl's proffered arm, they walked to the carriage to be driven to the opera, where they arrived after the performance had already been in progress for some time.

"Take me into Papa's box, Karl" said the young lady, as he led her into the theatre. They reached their seats without attracting any attention.

Somnambula, as everybody knows, was the favorite role of the "Swedish Nightingale." The house was crowded, and the audience seemed to be completely enraptured by the marvellous singing of the grandest voice ever heard from any stage. While society of Mayence was interested in watching the play and listening to the wonderful singing, no one had any idea that the young and beautiful Helene von Cannstatt occupied her father's box with a private soldier acting as her cavalier on this occasion. Presently, however, the curtain was lowered on the close of the first act, and soon opera-glasses went up from all directions, levelled at the two lovers. In a few minutes they were the cynosure of all eyes and the sole topic of discussion throughout the theatre. Jenny Lind and her nightingale voice were forgotten. All the prominent people, of course, knew the Lady von Cannstatt, but nobody had the least idea as to the identity of the handsome young man beside her. It is easily imagined how quickly and absorbingly such a choice morsel of gossip was appreciated, and these people, whose lives were not fraught with much ex-

citement anyhow in a town like sedate, old Mayence, naturally made the most of it. All kinds of stories were quickly set afloat, and carried with almost electric celerity from box to box, from stall to stall. Owing no doubt to the dignified, gentlemanly bearing, the faultless attire, and above all the noble appearance of Karl, he was by unanimous consent taken for a prince from a neighboring principality. Everybody of any consequence was already enjoying in anticipation the great honor of receiving an introduction from Helene to the Prince X.

Colonel von Wuesthoff and his wife, the sister of Helene, were also at the theatre. Their box was located immediately above the one occupied by the two young people, and hence they had not yet seen them. In fact, the Wuesthoffs were totally ignorant of the excitement among their friends, nor did they know the cause of it, until at last somebody came and asked the colonel:

"Apropos, who is the handsome stranger in General von Cannstatt's box?"

"Stranger where?" Wuesthoff answered, without the least idea of what the questioner was alluding to.

"Why, do you not know that the Lady von Cannstatt is in the theatre with a very distinguished looking stranger, a gentleman, whom everybody believes to be the Prince X.?"

Still the colonel did not seem to understand.

"My sister-in-law is at home, as far as I know, and for all Prince X. is concerned, I do not think that she is even acquainted with him, so she could scarcely be here with him to-night, and certainly not alone. Is the general not there as well?"

"No, he is not; they are occupying the box alone; but I perceive that you do not know, and begging you to excuse my intrusion, permit me to withdraw," concluded the other, with a sarcastic smile.

"Who can this be, and what can it mean?" was the first question Lady von Wuesthoff asked her husband as soon as they were alone again. "You had better go and see!"

"I suppose so, but not now. I hear the signal for the curtain to go up, and I will wait until the play has commenced. My disappearance will not be so noticeable. Who can it be, anyhow? You did not hear of any visitor at your father's house?"

"No, and I am as much puzzled as you are."

In the meantime the curtain had risen again, the lights were turned down, and Colonel von Wuesthoff walked out towards the opposite part of the theatre in order to have a good view of the Cannstatt box. But when he got there he could not see anything, except that the box was occupied by a lady dressed in white. He noticed also the scintillations of her diamonds, but nothing else could he observe.

"What a fool I was not to think of this. Of course, now the lights are turned down, I could not recognize anybody in that box, even were it the king himself," angrily muttered the colonel; "the best thing to do now is to stand here and wait until this act is over."

He tried to get interested in the performance, but failed. Ever and again his eyes instinctively wandered across the theatre to the Cannstatt box, where they became fixed, as it were, in a penetrative gaze. But it was of no avail. The soft, half light proved a too effective cloak. While his eyes endeavored to pierce the baffling gloom, his mind was engrossed with deep speculations as to who the unknown might be. He was aware that Helene was a prize upon whom every marriageable man in Mayence was willing to stake his all, and he also knew that hitherto the young lady had playfully, but determinedly checked all advances in that direction in their very incipency. Whoever he was, therefore, occupying that box with her to-night, must have been able to cause her to change her mind quite suddenly, and the man who could do that with Helene von Cannstatt must be a wonder, whose acquaintance could not be made too soon. Thus argued the colonel, who flattered himself possessed with a shrewd sagacity.

"Hortense"—that was his wife's name—"does not appear to know anything about this affair either, or she would certainly have told me. Yet the matter is portentous, for Helene would never condescend to be seen in the theatre with any man, unless she preferred him to anyone else."

His patient curiosity was at last to be rewarded. The closing scene of the act terminated. Now the curtain dropped. The gas was turned up and the auditorium appeared in a blaze of light. Wuesthoff gave a fiendish glare, but he either could not or would not believe his eyes. Again he looked intently. Evidently convinced that he had recognized his man, he turned away and hurried to his own

box as quickly as he could, afraid that some one might stop him and ask questions, which he did not feel like answering. He got to his wife without any interruption.

"Let us go home, Madam, we are disgraced!" was all he said to his wife. and Lady von Wuesthoff realized by the look in her husband's eyes that she had better not ask any questions. Wraps and cloaks were hurriedly picked up, and in a few minutes Colonel von Wuesthoff and his wife were rapidly driving towards their home.

The young lovers, who so unintentionally had created all this excitement in the audience, were utterly ignorant of what was going on about them. The happiness, which had so recently shed its pleasant light into their hearts, was so all-absorbing that speech was abandoned between them. Apparently deeply interested in the story enacted before them, both were recalling again and again the incidents of the past few weeks, which culminated in the sublimely sweet climax of an hour ago.

Karl, however, practical, matter-of-fact man as he was, soon came to a realization of his present position, and the more he thought over the matter, the darker grew the picture, which gradually developed before his mind. He felt that in the eyes of these people in the surrounding seats he had compromised Helene irrevocably. He knew the ideas prevailing among these petty, small-minded representatives of the so-called "Quality" too well, and he trembled as he looked at the beautiful girl beside him, who, he felt, would henceforth be ostracised as an outcast, who had disgraced herself and them. And what had he done? Was he not an honorable man? Was he any worse than they, because he could not trace his ancestry through a long lineage of robber barons, or some such aristocratic family tree? Was it a crime to be born in a hut, and a virtue to enter the world in a palace? No! a thousand times no! He was proud of his ancestry and of his forefathers, who had all been honest farmers, working day in and day out. And his father, tall, wrinkled and greyhaired though he was, a kinder, more generous and good-natured man never breathed, and he was worth a hundred of these old scions of ancient aristocracy, who had nothing in the world but a handle to their names, and there were few who did not use that handle to steep their own individuality in vice and dishonor.

This reverie of dark, evil thoughts could not fail to show its reflection upon such a clear, open face as Junker's; and it was not long before Helene awoke him, as it were, by saying :

"What evil genius is at work within you, Karl, dearest? Your face seems to be heralding misfortune to somebody."

"I have been thinking what effect my being here with you will have upon these people in the theatre, what effect it will have upon society, of which you are the star. Believe me, the more I think of it, the more I am ashamed of myself."

"And pray, what is it you have to be ashamed of?"

"Ah! you do not understand, but I will tell you—it is not too late yet, and there is still time to save you!"

"Save me, save me, Karl—why, what morbid fancy is this, which suddenly seems to have taken possession of you?"

"Listen to me, darling. I loved you so deeply, so passionately, that my reasoning faculties were for the time overpowered. God knows I would sooner die a thousand deaths than hurt a hair of your head. But I was mad, mad, mad! Do you realize that when you told me you loved me, you committed an act which has probably forever placed you outside of the cherished circle of your family, your friends, your acquaintances? Do you know that you then took the first step toward a mesalliance? Do you realize that your father's arms will hesitate to embrace you, your sister will disown you, your friends will shun you, and aristocratic society will forever shut its doors upon you? Do you not know that, according to the ethics of the unwritten code of aristocracy, an alliance which for its foundation has nothing but mutual love is considered a fatal mistake?"

"My dear Karl," Helene at last interrupted him, "do you suppose that all this can in the least influence me? Have I not pondered and thought this over day and night, ever since that first evening when you took me home after the races? Mentally, Karl, I then placed you on one side of the scale and the whole world on the other, with this result: that the whole universe and all it could offer me weighed as naught in comparison with your love. Yet, withal, I am an aristocrat, but not, I hope, as the world accepts that term. I have always felt that there really exists but one aristocracy, and that is the aristocracy of the mind, the soul, the character. Am I any the better for being

called Helene, Countess von Cannstatt, than if I were simply Helene Cannstatt? Have I not been imbued with the hollowness of these nominal appendages ever since I began to understand their real meaning? Why, Karl, you can not really love me, if you think that I entertain any of those silly notions of pride of birth, rights of lineage, prerogatives of rank and what not, which are synonymous terms among our modern aristocracy, the upholding of which is almost their religion. In the cradle to me all human beings rank alike, in after life each one is what he or she makes of himself or herself."

Karl listened to her perfectly enthralled by the beautiful sentiments falling from her beloved lips, his heart thrilling in deepest admiration.

"How grandly you speak, how immeasurably proud I am to have won your love; and yet, darling, I can see nothing before us but a vast blank, an impenetrable abyss. Ah, whatever you may think to-night, you can not realize what to-morrow may bring forth. To-morrow our presence here will be the one topic of the city. In the ladies' boudoirs your fair name and reputation will be dragged through the false teeth and painted lips of all the ugly old dowagers and simpering young misses of the garrison. Stories and rumors chameleon hued will be circulated, and reported to your sister; if you venture in the street perhaps the soldiers even of my own company may recognize you and point their finger at you, saying, There goes the Countess von Cannstatt, who was at the theatre last night with Junker of 'Ours.' I beg, I implore, aye, I entreat you, my own misguided love, send me back to the barracks and the farmhouse. Surely you must see it as I do: it is only for your sake, for your own welfare that I thus urge you. I have nothing to gain, nay, I lose all, yet I am willing to relinquish the sweet rights you have yielded up to me to-night. I will endeavor to bury their memory deep, deep down in my heart of hearts, while life lasts. Will you, Helene, will you give me up? Say yes!"

With a look of majestic loveliness and an enchanting smile, Helene rose from her seat, and placing her lips to his ear, she whispered: "I will never let you leave me unless you cease to love me!"

CHAPTER VI.

The next morning the news, that the beautiful Countess von Cannstatt had been seen at the opera the night before with a very distinguished looking stranger, whom everybody believed to be the Prince X., flew from mouth to mouth. It was rumored he had arrived in the city incognito, and that he was a guest at the Kaiserhof Hotel. The report spread all over Mayence and formed the sensation of the hour. Nobody as yet appeared to have the slightest suspicion as to the identity of Junker. This was not astonishing, because the idea, that a young lady of the rank of a Cannstatt should go to the theatre with a common soldier, would have been deemed too preposterous. Such were—and for that matter are yet—the social conditions in Germany. The supposition, that the elegant, noble looking gentleman in evening dress might have been the same person who so heroically distinguished himself on the day of the last horse races was never dreamed of, because, albeit since then the disappearance of the Apollo of the Barracks was known to everybody, it was so merely by reputation and not by observation.

The two young people had been actually recognized by three persons only. These were, Colonel Wuesthoff, who had every reason to know his face anywhere, and Junker's comrades, Frederick and Phillip. For obvious causes the colonel did not divulge the identity of the stranger to any one but his wife; and the two soldiers, out of loyal friendship to the companion of their youth, thought it advisable to keep the matter to themselves, because they knew that Junker had committed a breach of military law in going about in the dress of a civilian. These circumstances caused a great disappointment to those so fond of gossip and small talk; and what had promised such a rich subject to the scandalmongers, concentrated itself into a mystery that defied even the acutest penetration.

While Frederick and Phillip were standing in the barrack yard the following morning, discussing Jenny Lind and the opera, the former suddenly put his mouth to his friend's ear and remarked:

"Say, Fred, did you notice Karl in the theatre last night?"

"Yes, and you know I did."

"Well, I suspected you had a reason for looking at the occupants of General von Cannstatt's box so often, so I made up my mind to see for myself, after I had watched you for some time. What a surprise I met, when I recognized Karl, dressed up like a duke. Well, I shall never forget."

"That is just the way it struck me. Still, do you know, Phillip, I feel awfully sorry for Karl, because he is sure to have gotten himself into trouble over this. Just imagine what the colonel will say when he finds it out."

"Oh! he has already done so. I watched the old fox leaving his box and going to the opposite side of the theatre for the very purpose of getting a good view of them."

"Was he there? Did you really see that? Well, then, God help poor Junker!"

"Certainly I saw him; but what can he do to our friend, except giving him 'three days' for dressing in civilian clothes?"

"Why, you blockhead, are you so blind as not to see that the colonel feels himself highly insulted?"

"H'm, I do not see what he should feel insulted about. Karl is the finest looking man in the army, a gentleman in manners and by education. For a man like him to go to the theatre with a countess cannot be called insulting, in my opinion."

"But is he not an aristocrat!"

"And what has that to do with the matter?"

"Everything in the world. Any man may be good looking, have excellent manners and the finest of educations, in fact, any man may even be a gentleman, but any man cannot be an aristocrat."

"Begging your pardon for differing from you, but there are damn few aristocrats who are gentlemen."

"Be that as it may, I will not even contradict that statement, yet all this discussion does not alter the fact that Colonel von Wuesthoff is not the man who will look with any more favor upon Junker because he went to the opera with his sister-in-law. You know as well as I do that our colonel considers himself a nobleman with the bluest of all blue bloods. He is not what you or I would call a nobleman, but one who lays claim to that distinction because he

is a descendant of a man who went into the Crusades with Fredrick Barbarossa, and, finding no decent occupation when he returned home, went into the business of highway robbery, waylaid and plundered merchants and travelers on the highway between Frankfurt and Cologne. Of course you and I feel much better, because we have no ancestors at all, sooner than admit the fact of descent from such an one. But then we are common people, utterly devoid of these finer instincts possessed by an aristocrat. Now the colonel, on the contrary, is very proud of this forefather of his. He has his picture, "done in oil," hanging in the place of honor in his library. Thus you will observe how ideas may differ, and I will bet my sergeant's stripes that his idea about Karl going to the opera with the Countess von Cannstatt will find its expression based upon that finer aristocratic instinct of his. The result will be altogether unsatisfactory to you and me, and I fear very unpleasant to our friend Karl."

This was a very long speech for Phillip to make, and it took the other some time to think of a proper reply; but ere he could say anything the two had their attention drawn to a scene which ended the discussion. Two soldiers with shouldered arms walked across the yard, and Karl Junker, in his uniform, but without side-arms—evidently a prisoner—between them.

"By my sergeant's stripes," Phillip burst out—using, as he always did when excited, the name of his recently acquired mark of distinction—"what did I tell you? There is Karl being led into arrest this very moment."

"You are right," replied Frederick, with a sigh, which showed plainly how sorry he felt for the prisoner, "it is Karl, and, no doubt, the colonel has already been at work this morning plotting a resentment for the insult inflicted upon him and his family. Let us go and find out what charge has been brought against him."

At the guardhouse door they met the two soldiers, who were returning after having delivered their prisoner.

"Well, comrades," Phillip addressed them, "what in the world has the Apollo of the Barracks done, that he should have been locked up so early in the morning?"

"We do not know the cause of his arrest, sergeant. All we can tell is this, that the captain ordered us, about a quarter of an hour ago, when we came in off guard duty, to the colonel's quarters. Arrived there, the colonel appeared to

be waiting for us, because he opened the door himself to let us into the house. He led the way for us into his library, where we found Junker. Pointing to him, the colonel ordered us to take off his sabre. This command complied with, he said: "Now take this fellow over to the guardhouse and tell the officer in charge to keep him under personal surveillance until he hears from me further." Then we left the house with Junker between us. Not having any right to speak to the prisoner, we did not ask him how he got into trouble, and he did not volunteer any information. That is all we know."

"All right, boys; much obliged." With these words Phillip dismissed the two soldiers, while he and his friend walked silently to their respective quarters.

The news that Junker, the favorite of the barracks, had been locked up in a very mysterious manner spread through the regiment like wildfire, and all kinds of rumors were circulated. But if the arrest had caused excitement in the morning, the barracks were treated to another sensation in the afternoon, when the news was announced that Junker had all of a sudden been set at liberty.

CHAPTER VII.

When von Wuesthoff and his wife so precipitately left the theatre on the night Jenny Lind appeared in Mayence as Somnambula, they were both in high dudgeon. The anger of man and wife, however, took two distinct directions. The colonel gave vent to his feelings by abusing Karl Junker up hill and down dale, while the lady laid all the blame for their disappointed evening at the door of her sister. Thus it has always been, whenever a man and a woman are accused of having committed a breach against the social proprieties, the man will nearly always be blamed by his sex and the woman by hers. The reason for this is plain. The man can form a tolerably fair judgment of his brother's action by placing himself in the position of the accused, but he can scarcely be expected to be so well informed as to the woman. And if in such case the sexes are reversed, the woman's judgment is no doubt the same. This leads to the very interesting question: Why should not woman be allowed to sit in the jury box as an arbiter upon her own sex for their transgressions of the law? Even

Shakespeare proved that a woman may be a good lawyer, and why should she not be an equally good juror? By all means let us have a woman's jury to judge of woman's crime.

"I am going to have the fellow locked up," was the remark by which the colonel thought he had summed up the case against Karl, "the impudent, impertinent rascal."

"I regret my inability to agree with you, but in my opinion the young man is the least to blame," quietly replied Lady von Wuesthoff, dissenting from her husband, something she rarely ventured to do.

"Pray, madame, and since when were you so rich as to own an opinion yourself?"

The brutality of this retort staggered the lady for a moment, and a heavy sigh escaped her lips. But she was evidently used to this kind of treatment.

"Pardon me, your judgment is undoubtedly superior to mine. I am merely expressing the idea of a woman upon a woman's wrongs, and if you will permit me to say so, I believe that Helene must certainly have given the young man some proof of her partiality toward him, or else she could never have consented to his becoming her escort to the theatre. I dare say you will condescend to the allowance of his good looks?"

This speech did much to mollify the colonel. Coming from anybody but a German lady and directed at her husband, it might have been considered very fine sarcasm. But who ever heard of such a thing as a German woman indulging in sarcasm at the expense of her husband?

"H'm, yes, fine figure, a fashion plate," in a grumbling tone of voice answered the colonel.

"Certainly, yet that is the style of masculinity young girls find frequently attractive. True, the man is of low birth, but if you will remember that Helene's notions upon this subject are shockingly radical, even so far as to regard a crossing-sweeper equal to a duke, her infatuation may be easily explained. I may be wrong, of course, still I venture the assertion that she was the originator of to night's escapade."

However, it was impossible for von Wuesthoff to remain long in a good temper, and he soon relapsed again into his usual sneering tone.

"No, madame, with all due respect to your apparent

knowledge of the aptitude for woman to deceive and intrigue, I cannot allow the idea that Helene—albeit she is your sister—could ever forget herself so far as to disgrace her family by considering a common soldier her equal.”

“Your argument has the unquestionable merit of being applicable to the generality of highborn ladies, but my sister is an exceptional, aye, I might say a unique character, if you will, in this respect, who, if it suited her fancy, would dare all, no matter how any one else would be affected by her actions.

Lady von Wuesthoff maintained that prerogative so dearly cherished by all women, “the last word”—not because her husband acknowledged his defeat, but on account of their arrival at home, which ended the argument.

The affair must have troubled the colonel all night, for the following morning he was up long before his customary hour. The first thing he did was to send for Junker, who not long after appeared before his superior officer, his mind filled with misgivings as to the outcome of the coming interview. By way of saying good morning, the colonel received him with a volley of invectives, and oaths, such as can only be found in the most extensive vocabulary of an officer in the German army. But Karl knew him well, and he listened to the stormy outbursts of passion calmly and unaffectedly, like a sturdy oak would stand against the blowing of the wind. At last the colonel regained command over himself, and began plying the young man with questions. He addressed him in the customary manner of all German aristocrats and superior army officers, when speaking to a person considered of low degree. In other words, he addressed him in the third person singular, a mannerism introduced into Germany by Frederic the Great, and which has since been rigidly followed and affected by the nobility.

“Where was ‘he’ last night?”

“At your service, colonel, I was on leave of absence.”

“I know that, but where did ‘he’ go?”

“To the opera!”

“With whom?”

“The Countess von Cannstatt.”

“And was ‘he’ aware of the relationship existing between this lady and myself?”

“I was fully aware of the fact that you are the lady’s brother-in-law.”

"And yet 'he' went?"

"I did, colonel."

"Without deeming it necessary to ask my permission?"

"I asked the lady, and she graciously accorded me the honor to be her escort."

"Well, by all the guns in the artillery, but 'he' is the most impertinent dog of a soldier I have ever had the misfortune to come across. Did 'he' for a moment suppose that I would countenance such a thing? Poor devil that 'he' is, a mere private, without name or fortune, 'he' dares to presume so far as to wheedle himself into the good graces of a member of my family. It is the most preposterous piece of arrogance that has ever come to my notice, and an act of insubordination, the punishment of which will afford me the most profound delight. I suppose 'he' has even gone so far as to make love to the lady?"

Junker stood there like a statue and, did not reply to this remark, though it was noticeable, by the color on his cheek, that he had recognized the intended insult.

"Donnerwetter, is 'he' not going to answer me?"

"No, colonel, I decline to answer that last question of yours."

If a bomb had exploded at von Wuesthoff's feet, he would not have been so much surprised, as he was taken aback at this reply of the young soldier. The man had positively refused to submit to any catechism by his superior officer. It was unheard of. A terrible rage took possession of him, and he would like to have strangled the young fellow on the spot, but a glance at the imperturbable figure before him caused him to hesitate.

"Ha, Canaille, what was that 'he' said?"

"Pardon me, colonel, I am only a private soldier, and while willing to be your submissive and obedient servant in accordance with the laws and rules of the army, you cannot expect me to be entirely devoid of self-respect. This affair is to me far more serious than life or death, hence you can not wonder at my refusal to discuss this subject with you in a flippant, contemptuous manner."

The colonel's face grew ashen. "Does 'he' know that I could have 'him' shot, if I wanted to?"

"I know that as my colonel you have a great deal of authority, and you take full advantage thereof, but you can not have a man shot without bringing substantial charges

against him. Thank heaven, this country has at least a few distinctive features superior to barbarism."

"Have a care. Does 'he' forget that I am 'his' colonel?"

"No, I do not; but I can assure you I would be deeply grateful to you, if you would, during this discussion, lay aside the mantle of your official position, in order that we might speak to one another, man to man."

"That can never be! It is my official capacity which compels me to speak at all to such as 'he' is. Otherwise I cannot conceive of any possible condition where a German nobleman would lower himself to such an extent as to enter into any discussion with a peasant."

Junker grew red in the face with suppressed indignation, then he replied in slowly measured tones:

"And yet, colonel, I recall a recent experience with a nobleman, where I had to stoop right down to the ground to get to his level, and even then he was lower than a peasant."

This allusion to the night when the young soldier found von Wuesthoff drunk in the street was perhaps not a wise one for Karl to make, but who is the man that could have listened to the stings of such shameless arrogance without being provoked to resentment? The effect Junker's remark had upon the officer can be easily imagined. His countenance became livid with rage and his eyes bloodshot with passion. For a moment he was rendered speechless with excitement, but though he said nothing, his looks bore evident indication that he entertained thoughts and designs in his brain which bode nothing but evil for the young private. Junker seemed to gain an instinctive conviction, that from henceforth he and the colonel would be deadly enemies; but, with the impetuosity of his age, he felt at that instant strong enough to dare the enmity of half a dozen colonels. Alas, he did not know the diabolical, revengeful nature of this one, or he would have shuddered at the possibility of contending against more. At last von Wuesthoff appeared to have regained control over his faculties.

"I will kill 'him' for that insult, even if I have to wait until my dying day to do it!"—he hissed through his teeth; then he went out of the room to return in a few minutes with the two soldiers, who led Junker into arrest.

CHAPTER VIII.

The German Aristocracy is the *pettiest* in all Europe, and anything, but the flower of the German nation. In the world's greatest achievements of war, science, art or literature Germany has ever held the front rank, but Bluecher, Kopernicus, Duerer, Mozart, Schiller, Goethe and hundreds of others, equally renowned, where all men, who rose from the people. The perfection of morals and the superiority of intellect is not found among the nobility, and the key-note for this fact is directly traceable to that custom, so strongly adhered to by the German Aristocrats, the *marriage de convenance*. All marriages are arranged there without in the least consulting the opinions or inclinations of the two persons most directly interested. It is as a rule, the consummation of a deal between two families, in which the ceremony forms the signing and sealing of the contract. Usually these marriages are already arranged, while the bride and groom are yet in their teens, even infants have frequently been betrothed. Love and happiness never enter into the agreement, and mutual affection is not looked upon as the *sine qua non* for wedded bliss. What the result of such marriages must be does not require much speculation. Where husband and wife are indifferent to one another, their children will as a matter of course, be devoid of those finer instincts, loftier sentiments and characteristics, which make humanity the reflection of God. The highest endowments of human nature are of necessity the fruits of human love, but never the visible outgrowth resulting from the satisfaction obtained by the indulgence of carnal desires.

Helene von Cannstatt by allowing herself to fall in love with a man, had committed a very serious wrong for a girl of her station, but she also intended to marry the man of her choice, and this was worse, because she thereby assumed the prerogative of others and overstepped all bounds of aristocratic propriety. Peculiar as it may sound to us, others had the right to form affections for her, and select for her the man who was to be her husband, and with whom she must live the rest of her life. However, the gravity of her case was increased a thousand fold, because she had selected as the choice of her heart a man from the people, a plebeian.

These were the thoughts, which engaged her mind on

the night when Helene came home from the theatre, and while her heart was filled to overflowing with joy, because she knew that Junker loved her, she was yet fearful with anxiety as to the future. She thought of the effect it would produce among her aristocratic friends, when the news got abroad, that she had gone to the opera with a common soldier, and that she intended to marry him. She mentally drew a picture of the startled looks on their faces, and in her fancy she could hear their expressions of horror, censure and general condemnation. She thought of her sister, cold, haughty and narrow-minded. Oblivious to the least sparkle of sentiment. Leading a life, whose paths all lay directly upon those lines prescribed by the etiquette of aristocratic customs. She thought of uncles, aunts and cousins without the least hope of obtaining a word of encouragement or approbation from any one of them. Still all this did not trouble or cause her to regret what she had done. Since she proposed to love after her own heart and meant to find happiness of her own making, she could not blame others for refusing to fall in with her views, when they had not been consulted, especially as her views were in their opinion extraordinary, and in direct opposition to aristocratic law.

At last she thought of her father and her face cleared. Of course it could not be expected, that he would sanction her choice unhesitatingly. The traditional custom of his race would not allow him to go that far; but judging him as she thought she knew him, she believed that by dint of filial persuasion, the conviction would very soon come to him, that it would be better to see his child happy, than force her into unhappiness.

Thus she reassured herself, and at last went to sleep with the inflexible resolution on her mind to either marry the man she loved or else not marry at all.

The following morning she made her usual visit to her sister. The Lady Wuesthoff was at home alone, her husband, the colonel, having gone to the barracks. Helene had been in the room less than five minutes, when from the manner of her sister, it appeared evident that she was exercised about something. The young lady at once suspected the cause of Lady Wuesthoff's preoccupation of mind and determined to broach the subject immediately, before the rumors circulated among the gossippers could be related to her.

"Some one must have recognized us at the theatre and Hortense has already been informed," she said to herself.

"Hortense," she then addressed her sister, "I was at the Opera House last evening with"—

Fraulein von Cannstatt did not get any farther. The elder lady held up her hands, as if to ward off some horrible spectre. "Helene," she burst out, "for mercy's sake do not mention the man's name in conjunction with yours. I know all, we were in the theatre ourselves, and I was positively shocked."

"Really, one would think you had discovered me committing a crime!"

"If you had, you could not have brought any more disgrace upon yourself, or upon your friends. Ah, Helene, how could you so forget your dignity?"

"I am not aware that my conduct was so amenable to censure, as you chose to find it."

"Are you then so completely lost to all sense of propriety as to ignore the fact, that it can scarcely be called becoming in a young lady of your rank and position, to go to the theatre accompanied by a common soldier, a plebeian?"

"But he did not look common?"

"No!"

"And I am sure there was nothing in his manner, even you, might have taken umbrage at."

"No, I must say, the young man behaved himself very well."

"Then pray how did I disgrace myself?"

"It cannot be, Helene, that you are so woefully ignorant as not to know what I mean. Why the man's name, his birth, his position precludes him from your society, and by giving the world cause to link your name with his in any manner, you have scandalized your noble rank and disgraced us among our friends."

"Those are the exaggerated notions of an effete aristocracy, which I would detest to entertain. By your own admission, he was no different in looks and demeanor from any gentleman; still, because he is a common soldier, whose ancestors were honest, hardworking farmers, instead of aristocratic idlers, he is to be tabooed. Had you seen me at the opera with Herr von Ramhagen, the profligate, spendthrift and gambler, who is notorious on account of his ugliness as well as his vices, I should have deserved your

accusations. To me it seems impossible for the mere accident of birth to have any effect upon the character of a person's whole life. Does it follow, because a man is gentle, refined, learned, polite and intellectual, that his children will be the same? Neither can anyone be considered noble because he is the scion of a noble family. King Oscar of Sweden is a descendent of General Bernadotte, who, I have read, was a shoemaker's son in France, and yet they say he is one of the noblest characters in all Europe. Did you ever read the inscription on Papa's coat of arms and ponder over its meaning?— No, I dare say not. It says: 'All men are equal!— Ah, you startle, Hortense, you are surprised. Nevertheless it is true. This being the motto of our family it seems to me our bounden duty to carry out its meaning.'

"But it is such an unheard of thing for a lady of rank to associate with common people. If this man had only some distinction."

"He has, he is a gentleman!"

"I mean a title of nobility."

"And I like him the better for being without that, because it seems customary for the man with a noble title to lack every other attribute of nobility."

"Good heavens, what language! Helene, I cannot allow you to express yourself in that manner in my presence; you perfectly horrify me. Do you not take any pride in your noble birth?"

"No, not the least. Morally speaking, I do not think I am any the better on account of my birth or my name.— But there, my dear Hortense, let us cease discussing a subject on which our opinions so widely differ, I was aware, when I went to the opera last night with Karl Junker, it would be considered an act which you would condemn. Still I went, and I came here this morning with the avowed intention of telling you all about it. Dear Hortense, you are my only sister, and while I am thoroughly familiar with the orthodoxy and conservatism of your views on this matter, I nevertheless hope to convince you that I am deserving of your sympathy. Try to forget for the time being that the fetters of aristocracy enchain you, and let me appeal to your woman's heart. I love this Karl Junker with my whole soul. My heart has gone out to him like a flood of light, which nothing can ever obscure. Stop! do not inter-

rupt me. I know all you want to say. I have studied and weighed the matter well. I am not the victim of a girlish fancy, nor am I the dupe of hypnotism. I love him with the whole of my concentrated passion. I know he is not my equal, in the opinion of the world. With me, however, love levels all human beings. If a heart is inspired with that love which can only be instilled by heaven, it never inquires about the antecedents, the family, or the friends of the one loved. I am aware that such love is out of fashion, and it is not found among us, who call ourselves the nobility, the higher class of human society. But the greater the pity. Believe me, love is divine, and it cannot be directed according to human will or dictation. To me, human love seems like the same chord of music produced on two different instruments; and if such love can only be found among the common people, I will gladly renounce the rank of my birth, and title."

Lady von Wuesthoff stood aghast with astonishment. Such sentimentality, as she termed Helene's notion of love, was altogether foreign to her nature.

"What will father say to all this?" she at last replied.

"Dear father, do you suppose that I have not thought of him? I have no fear as to what he will say. I believe he is fond enough of me not to oppose my wishes when he knows that my happiness, my life depends upon it. However, I want your approbation as well. Come, Hortense, you are the only sister I have, and while you may have thought that I displeased you, yet you know I did not do it wantonly."

Lady von Wuesthoff was about to make some remark in answer to her sister's pleading, when the door opened and the colonel entered. His appearance of course occasioned a cessaation of the entire subject.

He listened to his sister-in law's arguments without replying, but it was evident, by the look of his contracted brows, he was not favorably impressed with what he heard. When the lady at last announced to him she loved the handsome soldier, the colonel rose from his seat raging with fury.

"Ha, the scoundrel! It is just what I supposed," he answered, "the fellow has bewitched you, but I will take him in hand and reckon with him as he deserves."

He paid not the least attention to Helene when she

asserted that Junker was not to blame. Indeed, the idea of a young lady of the aristocracy desiring to exercise her own right in disposing of her love was too novel for the colonel. He, in common with all men of his class, entertained the same opinion of the absolute passiveness of women in such matters. Hence he did not find fault with Helene at all. His mind was fully made up, that she had been beguiled by the handsome appearance of Junker, and the latter had succeeded in ensnaring her, perhaps, by some occult means or other. So he remarked:

"Well, I am glad I had him locked up this morning, and under arrest he shall remain until he promises never to look at you again!—No, do not interrupt me, Helene; you do not know how to deal with these low, underbred people, but I do. In the meantime I would advise you to make a visit to your aunt in Saxony, stay there for a few months, and when you come back you will have forgotten all about this fellow. Such a miserable wretch, he is not worth wasting any sleep over, and—now I come to think of it, his time will be up in June, so if you stay away until then, he will have left the army. Good heavens! child, what in this world are you crying about?"

And well he might ask, for how could this clay-brained aristocrat, who could not comprehend the feelings of his soldiers, enter into an appreciation of the sublime passion of love such as this girl entertained for Karl Junker? She stood before him holding her hands to her ears, perfectly horrified at the brutal callousness of this human clod, who proposed to settle the happiness of her life in such a cold-blooded, offhand manner.

"For mercy's sake, Wuesthoff," she cried, when he did stop at last, "you make me shudder. Have you no heart at all? Do you suppose love such as mine is like a candle, that can be blown out and lit again at will? However, you do not seem to comprehend."

She broke off and again gave way to crying. Suddenly she ceased and, looking through tearful eyes at her brother-in-law, she demanded:

"Is it really true that Karl is under arrest, or did you only say that to frighten me?"

"Yes, he is in the guard house, and there he will stay until his senses return to him. Pah, Helene, do not give way to such sentimentality. I will save you from this disgrace; you leave it to me."

"But I do not want to be saved; what I want is to have you give immediate orders for Karl's liberation."

"Never!"

"Not if I make it an inducement?"

"Pray do not insult me; what inducement could you offer me to do such a thing?"

"Oh, I do not mean to bribe you with money; that is only done with ordinary jailers. You told me, just now, that it was fortunate nobody had recognized Karl in the theatre, in fact, he is generally supposed to have been the Prince X."

"That is true. I do not believe there was anybody in the theatre aware of the fellow's identity but myself, and I took great care not to divulge it."

"And what was your object in maintaining this secrecy?"

"I would sooner lose my colonel's commission than to have the fact become known among the officers and our acquaintances that you had been at the opera with a private from my regiment."

"That being the case you would not like me to tell the Baroness von Hallstatt, for instance, or your friend Colonel von Kammergau, of the Uhlanen, who this pseudo prince really was?"

"Good heavens, no! Why, do you know what would happen?"

"Indeed I cannot imagine."

"The effect would be that the whole city and the entire garrison would hear of it in a day. The people would point their fingers at you and at us, while society would ostracise us."

"Which no doubt you would consider a greater calamity than sacrificing the happiness of your wife's sister," replied Helene sarcastically. "Now, I feel differently on this subject. I love this man and I am not ashamed to say so to anybody. However, I will consider your feelings of brotherly affection, and keep the matter secret on condition that you at once sit down and write out the order for the unfortunate young man's release from prison."

The colonel was astonished. He had not expected this, and he bit his lips with anger. What could he do? He knew that Helene would keep her word, and he trembled when he thought of the scandal this affair would cause. Perhaps he might have to resign his commission. Sud-

denly, what to his idea seemed a clever thought entered his mind. Why not acquiesce in the girl's demand, and thereby cause her to think he really approved of her mad infatuation? Then, when his time came to settle scores with that infamous young lover, Helene's suspicion towards him would at once be disarmed. He sat down, wrote the order, called for a servant and sent him to the guard house with it. The result we know.

"Since you take the matter so much to heart, and sooner than see you unhappy, I have done as you wish, my lady," he said to Helene. Then he hurriedly left the apartment, and the two ladies sat there for a long time wondering at his unexpected readiness to accept Fraulein von Cannstatt's proposition. It was so totally unlike him.

CHAPTER IX.

Helene went home much better pleased with her interview, than she had dared to hope, and although she felt instinctively suspicious of the ready acquiescence on the part of the colonel, her heart was much lighter, because she had succeeded in saving Karl from remaining under arrest. She considered this in itself a great concession for Wuesthoff to make, even though she could not have much faith in his seeming approval of her love for the young soldier.

"I will now inform my dear papa," she resolved as she walked up the gravel path leading to her home. "What will he say I wonder?" However, he has often averred, that he does not consider inherited distinction ever had the effect of making a man better, than some one less fortunate in that respect. I also remember him saying once during an argument with Colonel Wuesthoff, that every day as good men are born in hovels as in palaces. I shall now have to put him to the test and find out, whether he is willing to put his theories into practice, and if so the cup of my happiness will be filled to overflowing; I shall ask for nothing more!" And if he is not pleased? was the next thought mockingly suggesting itself, but she had arrived at the door, which was opened by Johann, and her attention being called to something else, she dismissed the matter.

When Junker returned from the guardhouse to the barracks everyone was curious to know all about the cause of his incarceration, short though it had been. The ques-

tions asked him were many, but he gave little or no satisfaction to any of them. His two friends, Frederick and Phillip, however, succeeded in making him talk.

"Phil and I were at the opera last night," said Frederick, looking at Karl with a knowing twinkle in his eyes.

Junker was astonished for a moment, then replied:

"I hope you enjoyed the performance!"

"That we did, but you didn't."

"How do you know I was there?"

"Didn't we see you? Come now, Karl, you don't suppose, that a swallow-tail coat, a white shirt front and the surroundings of a private box are a disguise which we could not penetrate. There now don't frown at us, Phil and I are not going to talk about this affair, are we Phil, eh?"

The latter nodded affirmatively.

"Thank you boys," remarked Junker, grasping their hands, "I shall appreciate your silence as a favor. You understand, there are circumstances connected with my visit to the theatre last night, which I do not care to have made the subject of barrack gossip. Of course I never have had a secret from you, and I would tell you all about this, only it concerns another and I cannot speak, forgive me, will you?"

"That's all right, we know what you mean, do not say another word."

Junker gradually became more thoroughly aware of his position towards the Lady von Cannstatt, and as he calmly considered the event of the previous evening, his face grew flushed with delight. Then he decided to go and have an interview with the general. His mind made up to this effect, he crossed the barrack yard to the captain's quarters, for the purpose of asking that officers permission for leave of absence.

"I am sorry, but I cannot allow you to leave the barracks," the captain replied when Karl made this request.

"May I ask, whether there is any special reason for this refusal?"

"I suppose there is, and I should have imagined you would know all about it. You must be aware, that I ever treated you with the greatest favor, but in this case I have orders from the colonel not to let you pass through the gates without a written order from him."

Junker understood at once.

"How long is that order to remain in force?"

"Until you leave the ranks. I looked up your record to-day, and I find unless you wish to make the military your calling, that will be exactly twenty nine days from now. I regret to have to impose this confinement upon you, I say so again, because you have been a good soldier in fact, you are the pride of my company, and had it not been for your inexplicable stubbornness, you would have been promoted from the ranks long ago."

"I thank you for your expressions of kindness, captain, though I do not deserve them. I have simply endeavored to do my duty towards my fatherland, which demands from every one of her able-bodied sons service in the army. Personally I hate it, I detest militarism, and the cause, which demands its establishment and maintenance. It is for that reason, I would never seek, or desire any promotion. No doubt these opinions will almost sound like treason to you, and I really ought not to promulgate them before you."

"That is all right, Junker, you need not apologize, I believe every man has a right to his opinion."

"Thank you. It is my conviction the world should inaugurate an age of universal peace. All nations should come together in a congress and there through their representatives, establish a code by which their relations to each other might be regulated. Then, if at any time any difference should arise a court of arbitration could decide the case."

"That is all very beautiful in theory, but in practice it would never work."

"I know it will not work now, but I feel sure the time will come, though we may not see it, when the world will enter this stage of the millenium, the era of universal peace."

Junker departed from his captain feeling great bitterness towards Colonel Wuesthoff. Still he accepted his fate philosophically, and he sat down to write Helene a letter, in which he apprised her of his inability to come and see her. He made a strong point of the fact, that his time in the army would be very soon ended. "From the day I leave the ranks, it shall be the pleasantest task of my life to serve you and you alone," he wrote.

When Helene received this letter, she recognized, that

she had not wronged her brother-in-law by her suspicions. However, she gathered consolation from the thought, that her lover would very soon be free from this yoke, and that she then would have him all to herself. But even, if they could not meet and talk to each other, they held constant communication by letter, Johann, Frederick and Phillip acting as the "postilions d'amour."

One morning, it was on the third day after the events just related, Junker's two friends came to him and informed him, that they had a great surprise in store for him. This communication was made in a manner, much like that of elder brothers, who were about to present their younger one with his favorite toy.

"It must be something good, I can read that much in your faces."

"Guess what it is then," remarked Phillip.

"He couldn't, even if he tried a whole year," said Frederick.

"You are right, my dear fellow, I never was good at guessing anyway, and to think of a pleasant surprise just now, is more than my brain could stand, so out with it, boys, and do not keep me any longer in suspense."

"We have a plan to give you an opportunity to run into town to-night for a couple of hours."

"What?— it is impossible!"

"There you are Phillip, I knew he would not believe us, if you were to broach the subject that way, why don't you go ahead and explain, or better still, let me do it," and suiting his action to the words, Frederick commenced:

"The fact is we have heard that orders have been given to prevent you from leaving the barracks, so Phillip and I knowing how hard such a confinement would be upon us, have been scheming to give you a chance to get off, and we have got it."

"Yes, that we have!" broke in Phillip.

"Now please do not interrupt me or I shall not be able to continue. Well this is the plan: To-night I am on guard duty at the barrack gate from eight until ten o'clock, and if you will go through between these hours I swear I won't know you."

The prospect of getting out and going to the Cannstatt mansion was very tempting to Karl, and he thought over it for a moment. Then he replied:

"But will my absence not be noticed inside?"

"No, it will not, that is also provided for."

"Yes, and as that is where I come in, please let me tell that part myself," and Phillip took up the thread of conversation. I have obtained leave of absence for this evening, but I do not mean to take it, because I want you to go instead of me."

"But how can I?"

"Easy enough. In the early part of the evening you complain of not feeling well, so that all the boys in our mess hear it. Then as soon as it gets dark I shall slip into your bed. That will be the signal for you to quietly depart. Why it is easy enough. Once you are outside no one will bother you. Only manage to get back before ten, because that is the time when Frederick goes off duty."

"It is a good scheme," Junker admitted, "still, supposing it should fail, we will all be very severely punished."

"It will not, it must not fail," both replied in one breath.

"I am not quite so sanguine about that. It might fail. No boys, I appreciate your kind intention and thoughtfulness for me, but I have no right to allow you to endanger your liberty on my account."

"The devil you haven't? Are we not friends? Have we not been friends, since the time we began to walk, or were able to talk, and would you not do the same for us. Do not be so squeamish."

"Yes, but this is a peculiar case. The colonel has made up his mind, that I shall not get outside the barrack gate, and if it were found out, I had gone, his wrath would know no bounds. You are aware how he dislikes being foiled in anything. I would not object so much, if he would only vent his ill-temper on me, but I would hate to see you treated that way."

"Look here, Karl, we have made up our minds to carry this scheme through, and you will have to submit. We insist upon it as a favor to us. We know, that there is bad feeling existing between you and the colonel at present, and we want to be in the quarrel too. Your trouble has always been ours, as ours has been yours, and why not this one? Have we not always been true to you? Have you ever had reason for finding fault with us as far as our friendship has been concerned; if that is so, very well, we

deserve to be ignored, and we are no longer worthy of your confidence."

It was big good-hearted Phillip, who spoke thus, and while the words came from his lips in a choking tone of voice, his large blue eyes were filled with tears.

"No, no, it is not that my friends. You know that. There were never truer hearts nor more devoted minds than yours, never readier hands nor quicker brains at the service of a friend, but this is an affair, which concerns me alone, it is a battle which I must fight single handed, and whatever the consequences, I cannot share them with anybody, not even with you. But believe me, I do not reject your assistance, because I have no faith in your willingness to help me, or because I have no confidence in you. Far from it, my opinion of you, and my feelings toward you can never change."

"Excuse my blunt way of speaking," said Phil, "but by my sargeant's stripes, if I had a sweetheart in Mayence; and I had not seen her for three days, I think I would not be quite so particular as you are, I would go to her, if the heavens fell."

"I am quite sure you would," answered Karl with a smile, "and you would find me ready enough to dare anything were the circumstances different. Even now the temptation is very great, and it is quite an effort for me to resist, but I must. Our time is nearly up, and we cannot be too careful of our conduct. I know the colonel is keeping watch over me constantly, and ready to let me feel the whip of his authority at the least provocation. For that reason alone I am almost positive the scheme would miscarry. Then if it were discovered that you were implicated in the affair, the punishment would fall upon you, with the certain result that instead of going home within a month, all of us would be in prison. One thing more, there is another person I must think of, who would be affected by the discovery of our plan, and it is mainly on her account that I beg you to abandon it. Now do you understand?"

The two looked at each other. Neither of them spoke. Each seemed to be waiting for the other to speak. At last Frederick remarked:

"You are right, Karl, it was stupid of us not to think of that; but we meant well. We were so anxious to do you a kindness, that we never took into consideration the

possible results of a failure. However, you must forgive us."

CHAPTER X.

It was written in the book of fate, which contained the record of Junker's life, that after all, on this particular day, he would pass through the barrack gate. Soon after the conversation between the three friends had ceased, a messenger came ordering Karl at once to appear at the colonel's quarters. He went of course to obey the summons, and while walking along he wondered as to what might be wanted of him. So many unexpected surprises had happened to him lately, however, that he failed to arrive at a plausible explanation, although he seemed to feel, that in the colonel's house nothing pleasant was awaiting him.

The cause, however, was this :

Helene and General von Cannstatt, her father, were sitting in the latter's library, the young lady had been reading a book, which was now lying on the table beside her. Whether it was the contents of the book, or something else of which she was thinking, it was evident from the far away look in her eyes, that her mind was deeply engrossed. Occasionally she would gaze across towards her father and scan his features very closely. But the imperturbable passiveness of the old gentleman's face seemed to afford little satisfaction to her scrutiny, and she became restless. For a long time she rocked backward and forward in her chair, until at last she rose from her seat, and walking to where the general was comfortably reclining on a couch, she knelt at his feet before him. Again she looked at him inquiringly.

"Well, my dear child, what is the matter, you look at me, as if trying to find an interpretation of your own thoughts on my countenance?"

"You are right, papa, but I have not met with any success."

"And what is it you want to know?"

"I have just been reading the story of Amalie, the sister of Frederick the Great, and I have been wondering, whether you, if you had been her brother, would have prevented her marrying Frederick von der Trenk."

"What an odd girl you are, and is that what you have been puzzling over, is that the reason you were making me the target of your penetrating stare for the last ten minutes?"

"Yes, papa. The story has considerable interest for me. In my opinion the king was very cruel to his sister, because a man endowed with the advantageous characteristics, which Trenk possessed, was certainly well worthy of the love of a princess, therefore the king ought to have allowed them to marry."

"I hardly know whether I can agree with you," the general replied cautiously.

"Why?"

"Because I am not a king, and I have not had a sister, who married outside of her rank."

"Then supposing you were a king and you had a sister, whom you professed to love dearly, would you, if it were in your power, sacrifice her life, her happiness, simply because she happened to love a man below her in rank?"

The general did not answer. Something in his daughter's manner, her earnestness, the look of anxiety depicted on her countenance, while talking to him, and her apparent excitement made him stop and wonder at the purport of all this questioning.

"What is the matter with you child?" he asked her instead of replying. "Are you not well? your face is flushed, your manner is peculiar, what is it that is wrong with you?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing, papa, only answer me; what would you do, if you had a daughter—a sister, who intended to marry some one you considered beneath her?"

The general again hesitated. He seemed to have an intuitive sense, that Helene had an ulterior motive in questioning him so closely and persistently upon this subject, though he could not imagine what her reason might be. While pondering upon this point, and thinking as to how he ought to reply, he looked at her again, and again noticed on her face that expression of eager anxiety. Her eyes were hanging on his lips, as it were, and before he had made up his mind what to say, she continued:

"In my opinion, the king behaved very heartlessly toward his sister. To me it seems, when two people love one another, they become virtually one being. Rank and birth cannot have the slightest effect either to encourage or discourage true love. Supposing a prince were to find himself on an island, which was inhabited by only one woman, with whom he after a while fell in love. Suddenly he discovers,

that she was born a child of the people, the daughter of a peasant. Must he then cease loving her?"

Most decidedly! A prince has no business loving a common girl, he is allowed to love and marry a princess only."

"Then you believe that one may cease loving, if an alteration of circumstances were to demand it?"

"I do, most emphatically!"

"Ah," Helene replied, sighing as if her heart were breaking, "then you cannot know what real love is. Don't you remember what Shakespeare said?—

" 'Love is not love, that alters
When it alteration finds.' "

"Pah, Helene, that kind of love never existed, it is merely the product of poetic imagination."

"Do not say that, papa, I pray, I implore you; there can be but one kind of love."

"Oh no, child, there are a great many. The one you speak of is generally found in novels, but in reality never!"

"I cannot make up my mind to believe that, papa; however, to return to our first argument, what should the Princess Amalie have done, then, when she realized that she loved Trenk?"

"She ought to have done, then and there, what her brother later compelled her to do: give him up! Why, my child, people of noble birth have no right to marry beneath them. They owe a duty to their name, their family, their ancestors, which is paramount to all others."

"Then you believe that name, birth, forefathers, rank and station are facts to be considered before one permits one's self to love?"

"Yes,—yes, dear Helene, I see you are beginning to comprehend now."

"Then, if you had been in the place of Frederick the Great, you would have done what he did?"

"Yes, now I come to think of it, I would have done so, most undoubtedly."

"But, not being a king, how would you have punished your own sister, as you could not have placed her in prison?"

"Ha! I would have disowned her."

"This reply seemed to penetrate the young lady's entire frame. She shook and trembled like a person taking

hold of the two poles of a powerful electric battery. She was speechless; at last tears came into her eyes, and she sobbed bitterly. The old man looked alarmed with wonder.

"Why, Helene, my darling child, what is the matter with you, why should this affect you so strongly? You must be sick. Had you not better go to your room and let me send for the physician?"

But his voice seemed to act as a restorative to her power of speech. She gradually grew calmer, but when she spoke it was still with a great effort.

"And if I, your daughter, loved a man whom you would consider—beneath me—in birth and rank—what would you do?"

"Why, child, I cannot imagine such a thing; you would not do it. Pah! a von Cannstatt, my own daughter; it is too ridiculous."

"Yes, but papa, supposing it were so, tell me, do not evade me,"

"Some other time, when you are stronger, we will discuss this matter again. You are not well to-day, and the least thing seems to affect your nerves."

"No, papa, I am not sick, there is nothing ailing me, but I am so much interested in this question that I should like to know your opinion; please tell me, will you not?"

"Very well, then, since you insist upon it I will cheerfully accommodate you, and satisfy your whim, although I cannot see why you should act so strangely, suppose such an impossibility. If a daughter of mine were to fall in love with a man below her rank and birth, I would certainly disown her, too."

No sooner had the general uttered these words than he would have been very glad had he left them unsaid, because they had the effect of causing Helene to fall at his feet in a deep faint. Old and feeble as he was, this unexpected occurrence lent him fresh activity. He jumped from his seat and pulled the bell for the servants with all his might. Half a dozen of them answered at once, no doubt attracted by the unusual vehemence with which he had rung the bell. He dispatched one to the doctor, while he ordered the others to carry Helene, who was still in a faint, to her apartments.

"The girl must have fallen in love with some one herself," he soliloquized when he was alone. "I must immedi-

ately set about finding that out. Ha! I know; I shall go to her sister; no doubt she will be able to throw some light on this affair."

Before Herr von Cannstatt left the house, the family physician arrived, and as Helene in the meantime had regained consciousness, the general went out, giving his daughter in charge of the doctor and servants.

CHAPTER XI.

Not many minutes after the general had arrived at the colonel's residence, the latter, as well as his wife, had been informed as to what had occurred to Helene, and they also received a hurried account of the conversation, which preceded the fainting spell.

"During our entire discussion," continued von Cannstatt, "it seemed to me Helene must be either indisposed, or else the topic was chosen by her purposely. To me the latter appears inexplicable, and to make quite sure I have come to you, because I thought if she were entangled in any love affair you would likely know about it."

The colonel, without a moment's hesitation, at once launched out in recounting all the details in his knowledge, laying great stress upon the "disgraceful" episode of the opera. How he had then for the first time discovered the affair. Of course, in speaking of Junker, he treated that young man most unsparingly; in fact, there was not, according to his description, "a decent atom in the fellow's entire composition." He was a pariah, an outcast, a human being beyond the possibility of deserving the least recognition from a von Cannstatt or a von Wuesthoff.

"He is a common fellow, a farmer's son, a private soldier," were the remarks with which Wuesthoff closed his tirade.

And as for Helene, she was not handled with gloves, either. Her charming sister, ever jealous of the younger child, seemed to take particular delight in telling her father how she had argued, protested, and taken Helene to task for bringing such disgrace and dishonor upon her noble name and position.

"But, dear papa," she continued, "you know very well how headstrong, opinionated and self-willed Helene is; you have spoilt her all her life. You must be familiar with her

notions about the equality of man, so I will not pain you by further recalling it all to you. Of course, whatever I said had not the least effect upon her, except, so it seemed to me, of making her more persistent in declaring that she loved this low man, and would continue to love him until she died."

"These were the consoling words the old man had to listen to from one of his daughters about the other.

"I feel that you are right in everything you say," he replied, "Helene has certainly disappointed me very much. How it grieves me I cannot tell, and I have always been so fond of her, how proud I was of her, how I have loved her and this is my reward. But I swear to you she shall never marry this person, not while I live. I would sooner see her carried in her coffin, than see her the wife of a peasant. And yet; and yet, she has been a good, loving and devoted child to me hitherto, so thoughtful, so affectionate, I cannot believe all this you tell me, it cannot, it must not be true."

"Would you like to see this fellow," asked the colonel with a sardonic smile on his face.

The general hesitated for a moment; at last however, he remarked; "Yes, I think I would."

"Then I will send for him, perhaps you might induce him to renounce Helene for some consideration."

General von Cannstatt was looking out of the window when Karl approached the house, and an exclamation of admiration escaped him, as he noticed the fine figure, the noble carriage and the gentlemanly appearance of the fellow, in spite of the fact that Karl was dressed in the uniform of a private soldier.

"That young man is more than an ordinary character, I like his looks, what a pity he belongs to the bourgeoisie. There is one thing certain, he is not the kind who can be bought with money as you intimated," von Cannstatt said to his son-in-law, when the door opened and Junker was announced.

The colonel and his wife withdrew, and Karl found himself face to face with the general, whom he at once recognized, and he naturally realized why he had been sent for.

"What is 'his' name?" the general immediately began questioning him.

"Karl Junker."

"Where does 'he' come from?"

"The Rhenish Provinces."

"What occupation has 'his' father?"

"He is a farmer."

"Was 'his' father a soldier?"

"At your service, general, he was; and if you will allow me to say so, he had the honor of serving under you when you were colonel of the Fourth regiment of Cuirassiers in Deutz."

"Hm," and von Cannstatt put his forefinger to his nose, as if he tried to refresh his memory, then he said: "And was 'his' father called 'Der schoene Junker, (The handsome Junker) when 'he' was in my regiment?"

"Yes, General, I see you are kind enough to remember."

"And 'he' belongs to the infantry?"

"At your service, the Thirty-ninth regiment."

"Since when?"

"1846, three years ago."

"I see 'he' is only a private, how is that?"

"I never sought promotion."

"Was 'he' offered any?"

"Yes, repeatedly, but I refused to accept it."

"What for?"

"I never want to serve in the army in any other capacity, than that of a private!"

"Papperlapap! 'he' must be crazy."

"No, general I am not."

The general sat down and for a minute or so not a word was exchanged between them, but all the while Herr von Cannstatt was looking at the young man, evidently communing with himself how to attack this man on the subject nearest his heart. Suddenly he got up again.

"By the way," he remarked, "I have been informed, that 'he' is in love with my daughter?"

"At your service, general who ever may have been your informant, has told you the truth, I love your daughter with all my heart."

"And where the devil did 'he' obtain the right to such an impertinence?"

"She, who has the first right, graciously accorded me that privilege."

"I suppose it never occurred to 'him' that I as her father ought to have been consulted in the matter at all?"

"I admit your rebuke is justifiable, and I know that you must think me at fault in this respect, but I have been a prisoner in the barracks for almost a week, and anxious as I was to go and see you, it was impossible."

"A prisoner, what for?"

"I can merely surmise the cause, but I believe Colonel von Wuesthoff can inform you."

"Ah, I understand,—Well now listen 'he' to what I have to say to 'him'!"

"At your service, general, I am all attention."

"I said a few moments ago, that 'he' is crazy, and I was right. A common fellow like 'he' is, who presumes to fall in love with a high-born lady must be mad, if 'he' expects that such a thing can be tolerated in this country. What 'he' deserves is a good horsewhipping, but for 'his' father's sake I will be lenient, and if 'he' will promise me to forget, that 'he' ever had such a crazy notion, I will forgive 'him' and let the matter pass."

"I beg your pardon, general, but when I came here I did not think, that you had sent for me in order to insult me. I am only a common soldier, a peasants son, but withal I am an honorable man. The love I entertain for your daughter is an honest love, it is for a life time. She has done me the honor to accept it, and it will only be at her command that I renounce it."

"Pah, 'he' is a poltroon, a poet, 'he' should fall in love with an actress."

"I am afraid for an actress my love would be too lasting."

The general began to realize more than ever that in Junker he was not dealing with an ordinary peasant. The young fellows appearance, his manner and address were imposing. True, these were no reasons to make him more acceptable as a suitor for his daughter's hand. He was a man of low birth, and he would have been objectionable had he been an Adonis in looks, a Socrates in wisdom and a Pythagoras in learning. Nevertheless the old aristocrat began to appreciate the manliness of Junker, and he decided to pursue a different line of argument with him, from which he promised himself better success.

"Well, young man, let me come to the point," he con-

tinued, "then it is really true 'he' loves my daughter?"

"Yes, general, it is, as I said before."

"Why, because she is a lady of rank, of position, of noble birth and family, because she is good looking?"

Karl did not answer, and the general continued:

"Come, come, now, young man, 'he' loves her because she is rich!"

"No, general, you wrong me, were she poorer, than the poorest maiden in the land I could not love her more nor less, than I do now."

"Then 'he' thinks, 'he' loves her unselfishly, disinterestedly?"

"I do, general."

"With the sole intention of making her happy."

"That is the aim of my life."

"Very well, I will admit that 'he' is honest in 'his' intentions, but 'he' forgets that 'he' cannot carry them out. My daughter has been brought up entirely different from the girls of 'his' class. Does 'he' suppose, that a lady, who has been living all her life in a high social sphere, can immediately change her mode of existence and be happy in a new element?"

"Yes I do."

"Explain 'he' that."

"Goodness is alike in all human beings. Whatever good there is among the aristocracy is also to be found among us common people. It is only in the vices where we differ, and while your daughter may not find the same faults among us that are prone to the nobility, she will neither find any that are worse. As for a change in her mode of life, that is after all but a matter of custom, of habit, and I can assure you my love is strong enough not to cause her a moment's regret or pain on that account."

"That is all pure sophistry, 'he' better have a care. I have been very patient with 'him,' but my good nature will not brook such idle theorizing. Helene is a lady, who has, all her life been accustomed to luxury, she has been waited upon from the moment she was born until this very hour. Every whim and wish of hers, that wealth could produce has been gratified, all the demands fickle fashion made upon her have ever been granted. Can 'he' not see, that she has become so accustomed to these things, that, to forego them, would be a hard task for her, a task, which would cause

trouble, grief and unhappiness?"

"No, general; you will pardon me for my boldness and for my presumption to differ with you, but if that is the estimate which you have formed of your daughter, I must say that you do not know her character as well as I do."

"'He' certainly does give proof of the most sublime impertinence I have ever met with, and if I listen to 'him' any longer I shall certainly lose control over myself. I see that we cannot agree, because 'he' argues from the standpoint of love, and I from reason and common sense. However, enough of this. I want 'him' to understand, that owing to the disparity of birth and position existing between 'him' and my daughter, 'he' can not make her happy; and hence 'he' must,—does 'he' hear? I demand it, for her sake,—give up all idea of ever seeing her again. To this end I command 'him' never to attempt speaking to her, wherever or whenever 'he' may see her."

Junker was silent. The earnestness of the old man caused him to think for a minute. What if the general were right?—and, no doubt, his argument was convincing. Sooner than make Helene unhappy, he would do anything. At last he replied:

"General, forgive me; I believe you are right. I have been looking at this question with the eye of love, and love, as you know, has no reasoning power. I am willing to accept your demands, and I will not make the least effort ever to see or speak to your daughter again. You are a much older man than I, and have had vastly more experience, hence I will submit to your superior judgment. I love your daughter, and I should like to make her happy, but if I can not do it, I will bury that love forever. However, I have one condition, general, and that is that you will, immediately upon your return home, acquaint your daughter with all the details of this interview, then let her be the arbiter of our fate, and whatever her decision, I will abide by it. Will you promise?"

"Why, dear fellow," answered Herr von Cannstatt, "I certainly will. I knew that 'he' would come around to my way of thinking."

"Yes, but it has broken my heart to do it, general. Will you allow me to depart now?—Good bye."

Before the other could say anything, Junker had left the room, and he hurried away to the barracks.

"That fellow certainly is a gentleman," mused the general to himself; "what a damn shame he is not a baron; I would be delighted to give him my daughter; but a private soldier, a farmer's son, good heavens! it is not to be thought of. Now I must see whether Helene can be persuaded in the same way. This was a hard task, but I am afraid there is a harder one before me."

CHAPTER XII

No sooner had Junker withdrawn from the general's presence, than the latter also took his departure. He never even waited to see either his daughter or Colonel Wuesthoff. Returned to his home, the intelligence awaited him, that Helene was delirious and in a state of high fever. This filled him with alarm, and he started at once for the sick chamber, in order to hear the opinion of the physician. He met the doctor coming out of the apartment.

"I hope there is nothing serious the matter with my daughter, Hansen," said the general, addressing the physician, who had been the medical attendant of the family for many years.

"The gracious young lady, general, I am sorry to inform you, is dangerously ill. As you are aware, she is naturally of a nervous temperament. She seems to have received a severe shock somehow, which has produced an attack of brain fever. It was fortunate you sent for me at once, and I have so far very strong hopes of bringing her about again. Still, it is but right to tell you the truth. Your noble daughter is in an alarming condition, and her case will require great skill and care."

"Good gracious, Hansen, is it really so bad as that? I thought it merely a fainting spell, such as seems the custom nowadays for young ladies to indulge in, whenever the occasion seems to demand."

"Ah, but pardon me, general, your daughter is not a young lady who would faint for the sake of effect. There was a cause, and a serious one, which created the shock in her nervous organism. However, you had better come and see her, to be convinced of the gravity of her condition."

The old man refused to go at first; he hated the sick chamber, but by dint of the doctor's persuasion he was induced to go upstairs. When he entered the apartment and

looked at his daughter, he was perfectly amazed. Only a few hours ago she had been conversing with him, apparently in her usual health and spirits. Now he beheld her in a state of high fever and delirium. She was talking in an incoherent manner, but the general could tell by the words she uttered the subject which agitated her brain. Such words as Karl, Trenk, Princess Amalie and Frederick the Great, although mysterious to the physician and nurses, were perfectly plain to the general. After a few minutes, silently as he had entered, he went out of the apartment.

"Do you think there is danger for my daughter's life, doctor?"

"Not at present, but I cannot say what developments this attack may have. She is young, strong, and there are other symptoms which indicate a favorable outcome, but it is yet too early to make any prognostications upon her case. Of course I shall do my best. I would also advise that you call in another practitioner, a specialist in such cases, and I believe she will then recover. In the meantime we must hope for the best. I will keep you constantly advised how she is progressing. Do not give way to unnecessary fears; while there is life there is hope."

With these remarks the physician left the general, who went into his library, deep in thought and sorely troubled as to what would be the end of all this. Yet here was only the beginning. Helene did not get better, neither the next day nor the day after. On the fourth day both physicians almost admitted that they were baffled in battling with the fever, which appeared to have taken complete possession of the beautiful young creature. Then came the crisis. Hansen and the great specialist both stayed with their patient through an entire night, but when the day dawned there came at last a turning point, and it seemed for the better.

For the first time since she had been carried upstairs, Helene regained a natural calmness of manner, and she lay quietly upon the bed, where she had lately been writhing in the most agonizing throes of delirium. The general was at once informed of the change, and a sigh of relief escaped him. Towards the afternoon Helene was awake and conscious for a time. She seemed to be anxious to say something, but her weakness would not allow her to articulate. One of the nurses, noticing her efforts to speak, leaned over

her, and she whispered:

"I want to see my father."

The medical gentlemen, when informed, were for a moment undecided what to do, but the gratification of this wish was at last consented to, and General von Cannstatt was asked to come and see his daughter.

The old nobleman received the summons with evident delight. The last few days had been a great trial to him. He had missed his child, his companion, his entertainer, in a thousand ways. Had he lost his right arm, it would not have bothered him half as much as to do without his daughter. He entered the sick room with tears in his eyes. Bowing his head over the bed, he kissed Helene, who, with a great effort, raised her arms and put them around his neck.

"What can I do, darling, to make you get well?" he asked her.

She looked at him, and there shone forth from her eyes a glance of tenderest appeal.

"Only one thing; let me marry the man I love," she whispered, and then she fell back into the pillows exhausted.

For a moment the father felt like yielding, but soon the aristocrat asserted itself within him, and he replied: "I cannot, Helene."

The pallid lips of the frail young sufferer did not move in reply, but a look of disappointment appeared in her eyes, so painful, so sorrowful, it might have softened the heart of anyone, except a stern old soldier. In a few minutes there were signs of returning restlessness visible in the patient, and both doctors were sorry they had given permission to the general's coming to undo what they had accomplished with such untiring efforts. The father left the room. He was grieved for his child and wished, he could help her except in the way in which she desired. In the retirement of his library he deplored his misfortune of possessing a daughter, who had so little regard for the traditional customs of his race, so little respect for her rank and position. One thing seemed curious, unless it were explained by his age and the unusual excitement, which the general had gone through in the last few days, and that was: he was not fully convinced of the gravity of his daughter's illness. He could not understand, that she might be dying.

The visit of her father to Helene, although it retarded

her progress towards recovery, had one good effect. It opened the eyes of Doctor Hansen to the suspicion, that the old nobleman had a great deal to do with his daughter's sickness. Hansen was a shrewd old fellow, quick to observe things and to turn his observations to advantage. Had it not been for this singular faculty of the physician this story would probably never have been written. But Hansen was also a cautious man, and he deemed it wise to keep his own counsel, until he had found out the origin of the trouble. During the evening the young lady was again delirious. Hansen being present, sat down on the bed and took notes of every utterance of the patient, as it fell from her lips. When he got home he studied the words he had jotted down, and he came to a conclusion not very far from the truth.

"The young conntess is in love with somebody, and her father refuses to give his consent to the attachment," he remarked to himself, "well, if I can help her I will do it, I may save her life and make her happy at the same time."

On the following day another sudden change for the better took place in the condition of Helene. The fever had at last been subdued by the incessant vigilance of the doctors and nurses. It was one of the latter, who first noticed the absence of any fever in the patient, and she immediately went to inform Hansen of the good news. This gentleman, however, received the intelligence very calmly and without evincing the least joy, much to the disappointment of the attendant.

"This is not necessarily a sign of the recovery of our patient," he remarked. "It is often the case, that a sudden departure of the fever is merely a forerunner of the approaching fatal end, and you will have to be even more careful now, in order to prevent this. I will at once go with you to see for myself."

And the watchful doctor was just in time, as an incident had taken place, which threatened to substantiate the fears contained in the doctor's assertion. The young lady upon returning to consciousness gazed anxiously about the room as if looking for some one. She was evidently disappointed in her search and beckoned the nurse to her bedside.

"Have I been ill very long?" she whispered.

"Yes, my lady, but you are now much better, and we hope you will soon be well and strong again."

"Where is my father?"

"In his library, I believe, do you want to see him?"

"Yes, indeed, very much," and the nurse thinking it would afford her a great pleasure at once sent word to von Cannstatt, that his daughter would like to see him.

The general very soon appeared, and as he leaned over the bed to kiss Helene, she murmured:

"Oh, papa, I do not want to die, yet I think I shall, if you do not send for Karl. Do papa, pray do, I love him so."

It was pitiful to see this suffering, frail creature, thin and emaciated, looking for all the world, as if she had wrested her life from the throes of death, in order to make this, her last appeal to her father. But the heart, usually kind and generous, seemed to be changed into adamant. He had an idea, that Helene was now out of danger altogether, and it seemed to him an excellent opportunity to fulfill his promise to Junker of informing her about the interview he had with that young man. But at this moment the door opened and Hansen appeared. He took the situation in at a glance and apologizing to the general he politely but firmly motioned him away from the bed. Then he took hold of the young lady's hand, as if feeling her pulse, and, after what appeared to have been a thorough investigation into the existing condition of Fraeulein von Cannstatt's case, he turned to the old nobleman and remarked with the blindest of smiles:

"You will pardon me, general, but your gracious daughter cannot be permitted to hold any conversation, if you wish her to live."

Von Cannstatt walked out of the room murmuring something about the impertinence of sawbones and quacks, which, while it may have eased his ruffled temper, did no one any harm.

Then Hansen inquired how the general happened into the sick chamber, and when the nurse, who had sent for him acknowledged the cause, the doctor immediately suggested to her the expediency of packing her belongings preparatory to her departure for home. To the one who had called him, he said:

"In future, I wish you never to leave Lady von Cannstatt under any circumstances whatever, and be good enough to observe, that 'no one,' is allowed to enter this

apartment without my permission."

The nurse bowed and nodded submissively. Hansen now turned his attention to the suffering young lady. Sitting down on a chair beside the bed, he took hold of her hand and fondled it like a father might fondle the hand of his child, then he said :

"My gracious Fraeulein, you have been and are even now very dangerously ill, and whether you will recover, rests to a great extent with yourself. I wish you to remember that there is some one living, who will be made very unhappy, if you die, unhappy during all his life. Now, I know well enough, you would not willingly cause a moments pain to anyone, much less to those you love. It is therefore necessary, that you do your best and get well as quickly as you can. I have been your servant and friend from the day you were born and you know I may be trusted. Still I am merely a physician, and it is my business to prescribe such medicine as will do your case good. But while my pharmacopœa has no remedy for your ailment, I will nevertheless find the cure for your disease, because I think,—and here the genial doctor smiled—I have discovered its origin."

Perceiving that Helene was making an effort to speak, he held up his hand to prevent her, while he continued : "Do not utter a word, I know all you want to say, have confidence in me, try to get well, and all will come right."

The medical gentleman then gave some other directions to the attendant, whereupon he left the apartment to hunt for the general. He soon found himself at the library door. He knocked, and a short, abrupt "Entre," told him that Herr von Cannstatt was within.

"I have come to intrude upon you," Hansen began, closing the door behind him, "because I feel I owe you an apology for my peremptoriness a few minutes ago in your daughter's apartment. As an extenuation of my impoliteness I can only say that I was urged to it, out of the deepest consideration for Fraeulein von Cannstatt's condition. I may also add that you have known me long enough to be assured I would not insult anybody, much less a nobleman, in his own house. We doctors are peculiar beings, must do peculiar things and on that account should have peculiar privileges accorded us.

The general appeared to be considerably mollified by

this apology of the good natured doctor.

"That is all right, Hansen," he replied, "I dare say you did it with the best intention, and I am not offended in the least."

"Of course I did, and that reminds me that I came in here for another purpose. Your daughter, as you must be aware is dangerously ill, and I have really almost given up hope that she will pull through."

"Good gracious, you do not, you cannot mean it, my only child, so young, so beautiful, what shall I do without her?"

"Ah, that's it, general, but when those we love most are about to die, we are never asked whether we can spare them. I have paid the closest possible attention to her case. I have had a written report made out by the nurses of every action of the patient, even so far as to have them write down what she said in her irrational moments. I have studied everything that would offer me the least clue to the seat of the trouble, and—I have arrived at the conclusion, that your daughter's heart is affected in a way for which there is but one cure."

"And what is that?"

"Give the heart what it yearns for."

"But how can we find out what that is?"

"You do not have to."

"Ah, then you know?"

"No, but you do."

"I?"

"Your gracious daughter is in love, general, and, pardon me for my frankness, with a gentleman of whom you do not approve."

The general walked around the room with his eyes on the carpet, as if studying the pattern. Suddenly he stopped, and, jerking (as it were) the words out of his mouth, he said:

"Well, and supposing you are correct?"

"Well, then here is my remedy: Give your consent to the attachment, and she will recover."

"Hansen, you do not know what you ask, because you are not familiar with the affair. It is impossible for me to do so."

"Why, is the man a thief, a murderer, or is he dead?"

"No."

"What is it, then, that prevents you?"

"That, sir, is none of your business. You may be my doctor, but I have not yet appointed you my father confessor."

If the general thought that this would, metaphorically speaking, floor this disciple of Æsculapius, he was greatly mistaken. Dr. Hansen had come here with a motive, and he was determined not to be put off.

"I am sorry, general, that you should regard my question as an affront. I am sure I had no intention of interfering with your affairs or prying into the knowledge of your private business. This illness of your daughter is an alarming one, and I am anxious to restore her to you in good health. It is my belief that she can be restored, provided certain means are applied, means which you have in your possession. As the young lady's father, is it unnatural for me to ask you for them? But of course, if it is immaterial whether your daughter gets well or not, and if you consider that I have transgressed the limits of a physician's prerogative, very well, let us abandon the subject. You can call in another medical man, 'the woods are full of them,' but you will also lose your only daughter, and her place can never be filled."

Herr von Cannstatt stood there, his chin on his chest, and he realized that Hansen was correct in his argument. It was easy to get another doctor, but he could never find another Helene. Yet, it was a bitter pill for his aristocratic pride, to make this man the confidant in this affair; still, what could he do? So he told him all.

Hansen listened to the story without appearing in the least astonished, nor did he volunteer any opinion as to the propriety of the case.

Hansen was a man with a heart full of the milk of human kindness, and his religion was to see everybody happy. To him all human beings were alike. When he was sent for in a professional capacity, he never questioned whether he was going to the house of a laborer, or into the palace of a duke. His mission was to alleviate the sufferings of humanity, and he performed his mission to the best of his ability with the same zeal and integrity upon the poor as well as the rich.

"Well," he said, when the general had concluded his narration, "there is but one thing you can do in this affair;

you must send for this young man, or else your daughter will not live."

"Never!"

"Very well; if you estimate your child's life and happiness so lightly, you will have to take the responsibility of her death with you into your own grave."

"Estimate it lightly; by heaven! I do not. I love her better than any one else on this earth. But still I cannot consent to have her form a mesalliance, or allow her to fall in love with a common farmer's son."

"And what does it matter, if that will make your daughter happy?"

"Ah, Hansen, you do not understand, you are a man of the people yourself; if you were an aristocrat, you would know what I mean."

"No, I am not, and if sacrificing the happiness of one's own children is one of the obligations of aristocracy, I am thankful I was born of the people."

"That will do, Hansen; let us cease this discussion."

"Very well, general. but let me remind you once more, there is but one remedy for your daughter's disease!"

"I shall not forget. In the meantime, I desire you to try what your own skill as a medical man can do. People do not die of love."

"No, but of broken hearts."

CHAPTER XIII.

During these days, the life of Junker was a terrible trial.

From the moment he had left the colonel's house after that interview with Herr von Cannstatt, his mind was in a fever of excitement. He constantly expected a message for his appearance at the general's residence. For of course, when he made the agreement with Helene's father to have her decide their fate, he was fully convinced the young lady, if she loved him as he felt she did, would never consent to a termination of her relationship with him.

But the anxiously looked for summons seemed never to be coming. Each morning's dawn awoke him with feelings of hope that the coming day would bring tidings from her, in whose love he had implicit faith. Yet each setting sun saw him retire into an unobserved corner, his heart

almost crushed with disappointment. This awful suspense between hope and despair wrought havoc with his nerves, which naturally had its effect upon his disposition. Especially was this noticeable during the first few days after that momentous interview. To his comrades in the barracks Junker had become an enigma, because they had no knowledge of the causes which had brought this change. But his two friends, Frederick and Phillip, who were at least partly acquainted with Karl's troubles, watched him with serious concern. All their attempts, however, to induce him to talk were fruitless. He accepted their advances with the same kindliness of manner, which seemed to be part of his nature, but he evaded all allusions to the real cause of his unhappiness.

This was very exasperating to those open-hearted young fellows, who among themselves had never known what it was to keep a secret from one another. But in spite of this display of secrecy and want of confidence on the part of Junker, their love for him never waned, and their ardor to serve him never cooled.

"There is something wrong," Frederick growled one day, "and since we can not find out from him, we must go somewhere else to discover the cause."

"But what can we do? Where can we go?" interrogatively replied the other. "He don't write any letters to the young lady, either, that's what puzzles me; and when one hints at her, his face grows red, and he frowns and fidgets about, it's enough to scare a fellow. There is something wrong, as you say, and by my sergeant's stripes we will have to find out what it is."

"How are we going to do it?"

"I don't—by heavens, I have got it!"

"I am very glad to hear it; let me know all about it."

"Since he won't come out with it, we must go to the young lady and get her to talk. The trouble is between them."

"Huh! how will you get her to talk? Likely fellows we are to call on a young and beautiful countess to question her about her lover. No, that won't do."

"You blockhead, you don't suppose I intend to address her personally?"

"Anyhow, that is what you said. What do you mean, then? Don't you begin beating about the bush, as well as

the other. One of us three in the sulks is quite enough."

"Well, I am going to interview her maid. I never yet heard of one of these 'Kammerkaetzchen' who did not know all about her mistress's affairs."

"Shake hands, Phil; by Jove you are quite a diplomat; that certainly is a good idea. When are you going?"

"Immediately."

The sergeant might have been noticed half an hour later passing through the barrack gate on his way to the Cannstatt residence. His "plan of campaign," as he termed it, once determined upon, he proceeded to carry it out in a manner worthy of Machiavelli. Fortune favored him. He had arrived within a hundred yards of the general's mansion, when he observed a young fellow—evidently the baker's boy, to judge by a huge basket on his shoulder—emerge from the gate. Phillip stopped him when they met, and entered into a conversation with the guileless youth, in which the former did all the questioning and the other all the answering. The result was, in less than five minutes the soldier knew the name of every one of the servants in the Cannstatt family, from the butler and housekeeper to the stable boy and the scullery maid. He had been informed of the sickness of her ladyship, the nature thereof, the number of physicians and nurses attending her, and after telling him the young lady was expected to die, the boy said:

"And it is all because she is in love with some one the general don't like."

Phillip thought he had learned enough for one day, and he therefore concluded to return. He found Frederick patiently waiting for him, and he was astonished to see him back so soon.

"Well, you certainly did not find out much in this time."

"I did though, listen. The old war horse has been informed of the whole affair, and of course he put his veto on it. The result is, the young lady is now supposed to be dying."

"The devil you say. That naturally explains the peculiar conduct of our friend. That is the reason he goes about as if he expected to be shot any minute. I wonder though whether he knows the young lady is ill, may be we had better tell him."

This they did, and to them, the effect of this upon

Junker, was surprising. Instead of showing signs of grief and sorrow at this unexpected intelligence, his face lit up with an expression of sublime satisfaction, and a sigh of relief escaped him. Soon, however, this gave way again to the old look of sadness.

"And is she very ill?" he asked.

"Hm, well, that is, I believe, I don't know, but, but I do not think so. I'll go again and find out definitely," stuttered and stammered the seargent, that question evidently having come too suddenly for him.

"No, thank you, that is not necessary; in fact I rather you would not go, because it might be discovered you went on my account, and under the circumstances I should not like to have such an idea go abroad."

From this day on it was noticed by Frederick and Phillip, that Karl, though he bore the plain marks of a man whose heart was steeped in deep sorrow, was otherwise calm and self-possessed, as one who had resigned himself to his fate. The two friends kept up a diligent mode of cross examination upon the baker's boy, whenever they saw him, but as the information never was of a favorable character regarding the young lady's health, they kept it to themselves. Junker did not broach the subject again, though it was evident he seemed anxious about the sick lady.

At last the morning dawned, upon the day which was to terminate the career of Junker in the army. Long before the bugle notes of the "reveille" resounded through the barracks, he rose from the bed, where he had been tossing the whole night in feverish excitement. This restlessness, however, had not alone been caused by the thought that very soon he was to be once more a free man, untrammelled by the chains of military despotism. No, he worried more and his mind was chiefly agitated, an account of Helene. Was she really dying, or should he ever see her again? Perhaps she might even now be dead. The previous night this feeling of fear and anxiety came so strongly over him, that he asked one of his friends, whether they had lately heard any news from the Cannstatt mansion about the condition of the patient. The information he received then had been discouraging and fearful dreams haunted him. The thoughts whirling through his tormented mind during the night, holding before his feverish brain the most pitiful

possibilities regarding the life of the woman he loved, were harrowing in the extreme, and made the hours seem like spells of eternity. When the eastern sky at last appeared in a faintly reddish hue, he uttered a sigh of thankfulness and welcome to the coming day. With the rapidly vanishing darkness, the gloomy murmurings of his heart seemed to disappear as well, and with the rising sun his bosom swelled with new hope for the future. The sound of the reveille inspired him like clarion chords of a fresh and happy life. He walked over to the bed of his friend Frederick, whom he found awake and ready to get up.

"A few more hours, and we shall leave this place for ever," he whispered. "When are we dismissed?"

"Immediately after the close of this morning's parade, all our papers are already made out."

"Thank God for that, I am now going to dress in my uniform for the last time."

These parades or inspections were held at uncertain intervals, sometimes once a week, or oftener. This morning everything appeared to be going wrong. Wuesthoff, the colonel of the regiment was evidently in a very bad humor, and as usual he found fault with everybody and everything. He swore in his own, inimitable style, and epithets whirled through the air like bullets on a battle field. The regiment had gone through several drills and exercises, all absolutely unsatisfactory him, so he announced that he was going to take command in his own hands. He rode up and down in front of the whole regiment, which was standing before him in two long rows of soldiers, one behind the other; a living wall of fine, strong fellows. It was really a beautiful sight, the brass ornaments on the helmets, the polished buttons and the mountings of the bayonets all shone in the sun, as if the men were decked in gold and silver.

Von Wuesthoff looked along the line with a critical, searching eye, as if he were able to discover the cause for his bad temper among these soldiers. Suddenly his gaze fell upon Karl Junker. He stopped his horse in front of him and contemplated him with a look, that might give you a very good idea of the manner, in which a tiger would gaze at his prey before he made the leap to devour it. But the young man never moved a muscle. He stood, as if he had been hewn out of marble and his sobriquet, "The Apollo of

the Barracks," suited him perfectly at this moment. While the colonel was looking at the young man, he must have been devising some diabolical plan for the benefit of the soldier, and moving up to him with his horse, he was about to address Junker, when an aid de camp came tearing along at full gallop and announced to von Wuesthoff that a messenger from General von Cannstatt had just arrived with a sealed note for him.

"Then she must be dead," he exclaimed loud enough, that Junker could hear it, and turning around he rode towards the group of officers, where the messenger awaited him. He hastily tore off the envelope and read the letter. Then he put it into his breast pocket, while with the other hand he mechanically pulled at his moustache, his mind evidently engrossed in thought. Suddenly he looked up and calling one of the officers to him, he remarked:

"Have private Junker of the eighth company called here at once!"

The officer obeyed and in another minute the captain of the "eighth" stood before his company giving the following command:

"Private Junker! Attention! Forward, march! Halt! the colonel wants you!"

Karl followed these instructions more like an automaton, than an animated being. Having heard the message delivered to the colonel by the aide-de-camp, as well as the exclamation made by the officer, the young man naturally became greatly affected. However, he hurried towards the colonel as fast as he could.

"Can 'he' ride a horse?" he asked Junker.

"At your service, colonel!"

"Then take that one of the messenger's, and ride as hard as 'he' can to the residence of General von Cannstatt, 'he' is wanted there. Now march and be off!"

But Junker did not want much urging, he was on his way before the colonel had time to finish the sentence.

CHAPTER XIV.

From the day the general and the doctor had their discussion about the patient in the former's library, a remarkable change took place in the condition of Lady von Cannstatt. It was a change, however, in no way welcomed

by the anxious and experienced physician. While her sufferings hitherto had been characterized by excitement, delirium and excessive nervous activity, a complete reversal of her condition now began to manifest itself. Her mind was perfectly clear, but all the nerves in her system appeared to be absolutely prostrated. The violence of her ravings was now changed into a placid calm. She rarely spoke. To watch her as she lay on her bed, Helene presented a beautiful picture of passive resignation. She seemed to be oblivious to her surroundings. Her eyes bore a look of deepest meditation. The ministrations of the nurses she accepted without thanks or a murmur of disapproval. All day long she gazed through the window of her apartment, which afforded an excellent opportunity to view the Rhine. Even the occasional visits of her father were not sufficient to awake her from the apparent lethargy of mind and body which possessed her. The only time she gave any evidence of life, was when Dr. Hansen would approach and address her. She then made an effort to converse and show some interest in what the physician had to say.

Thus the days wore on, and Hansen who scarcely allowed himself sufficient time to eat, watched the development of the young lady's case with the gravest apprehension. It was not long until he realized, that unless something extraordinary was done to revive Helene from her lethargic stupor, nothing would save her life. He recognized that while he had prevented her from dying of a rapidly consuming fever, he had accomplished no good, because she had now fallen into a slow decline. The end was a little farther off, but after all, it was merely a question of time.

"If I want to save that child's life," he said to himself one night, while on his way home after he had been sitting at Helene's bedside for the past six hours, "I will have to get the general to send for that young man, and I shall overcome his obstinacy yet, by heavens I will."

Anyone who knew the doctor and heard him say so, would have been convinced, that he meant it. He had a persistency of purpose and a determination of manner, which never acknowledged defeat until actually subdued.

The following morning, when the doctor made his usual call at the Cannstatt residence, he announced to the nurses in a voice loud enough for the patient to hear him,

that she could not live another 36 hours. Then he left the apartment for the general's library, and imparting to him the same information, he added :

"I am very sorry, general, I could not induce you to save your daughter from an early grave, because I fear it is now too late."

There was a tone of grief in these few impressive words which did not fail to have their effect upon the old gentleman. The general stared at Hansen in open mouthed wonder, and for the first time since Helene's illness did he seem to arrive at a full realization of what these words meant to him. He staggered to his feet looking at the doctor, as if he had been aroused from a trance. Then he tottered and had not Hansen quickly jumped forward the old man would have fallen to the floor.

"For God's sake, Hansen, the child is not dead!" he burst out.

"No, she is not dead yet, but the end cannot be far off."

"Ah, it cannot, it must not be, I will not have her die."

"Those wishes are all too late now, I am afraid," remarked the doctor.

"Is there nothing that can be done. Are the resources of your profession so limited, that they cannot save a life so young, so beautiful, from the grave?"

"As far as my knowledge goes, I must admit, the case is beyond me."

"And is there nothing that can be done?"

"Nothing."

"Let us go and see her."

Both went upstairs. When the doctor opened the door, and the general beheld the emaciated form of his daughter, a film seemed to fall from his vision, and he realized the physician's statement as all too true. He wondered why he had not been able to notice the serious condition of his child long ago. He threw himself down before the bed, took her hands in his and kissed them again and again, while the tears rolled down the furrowed wrinkles of his cheeks, as if never in his life, had he shed any.

Helene had noticed her father entering the room, and as she now observed him crying before her, she slowly, with a great effort, turned towards him.

"Do not cry, papa dear, because I am going to die, it

is better so. I am glad it soon will be over," she whispered. "I want to go dear papa, because now that you cannot love me any more I would not care to live any longer. If I have caused you sorrow, I hope you will forgive me, but I could not help loving Karl Junker, he was so good, so brave, so noble, so handsome, and I feel sure had you known him, you would have loved him too."

"Stop my child, stop," cried the old man, "every word you utter, cuts my heart like a dagger. It is I who should ask forgiveness. Blind fool that I was to sacrifice the life of my child, the only treasure I possess, for a mere opinion of the world. But my eyes are open now, and if it is not too late, I will make every amend in my power. I will even send for this young man, if you desire it."

The effect these words produced upon Helene was indescribable. Her face lit up, as if a halo of health and life had suddenly descended upon her. She actually seemed to be smiling, and the faint flush on her cheeks showed that the blood appeared to be coursing through her veins almost as vigorously as in health. But she scarcely believed that her father really meant what he said, and she replied: "It can never be too late to send for him, the very thought of knowing that he is coming will keep me alive, until he arrives."

"Very well, my dear child, he shall be here in less than an hour."

"Thank you, thank you, dearest papa," she sighed, kissing her father repeatedly. "I knew, that you would not let me die without approving of my love, and if I must die, even now, I shall have a peaceful death."

The general left the room to write a note to Colonel Wuesthoff, asking him to order Junker to his house with all possible speed. He made no explanation and gave no reason, except that the case was urgent. Then he returned to the sick chamber, but what a different aspect the place bore now, to what it did a short time ago. The old, faithful doctor made jokes with the nurses, and they smiled for the first time, since they had entered the Cannstatt mansion. Helene lay quietly resting on her pillow. She had her head turned towards the door, in order that she might notice anybody at once upon entering.

"How are you now, my dear daughter, do you still feel, as if you had to die so soon? What would become

of me were I to lose you. I should be like a cripple without his crutch." And turning towards the doctor, he remarked: What is your opinion, Hansen, is there nothing that will save my child, I could do even more than I have done already. To save her life no sacrifice would be too great for me."

The medical gentleman was about to reply, when the door opened, and a message was brought to him.

"I will answer your question when I return, general, please excuse me for a moment, I am wanted downstairs."

The fact was Junker had already arrived, and the doctor had been apprised of it first, because he had given instructions to that effect. He now hurried to receive him. One look at the young man, whom he had never seen, sufficed him to observe that Lady von Cannstatt might have done much worse by falling in love with an aristocrat. The doctor introduced himself, and without another word beckoned the young man to follow him. Karl obeyed and the two walked upstairs, the younger man, however, was anxious with fear and wonder. He would have been glad had the doctor given him an opportunity to ask some questions. At last Hansen stopped.

"A word of advice, my dear friend before we enter," he addressed Junker, "behind this door is the room in which Lady von Cannstatt has now been sick for some time. The sufferings, mentally and physically, which she has undergone have been very great. Time and again I have almost despaired of her life, even now, I do not know, whether she will get well again or not. It has been mainly through my instrumentality, that you are here. I have had an idea all along that your appearance and a reconciliation between the young lady and her father, might produce an effect upon the patient, which would lead to her recovery. It is the only hope there is to save her life. I have loved the lady since she was born, in fact I was the first person who ever saw her. So you can see my interest is more, than that of an ordinary physician. Now I want you to go in very quietly, display no excitement whatever. Greet her as if your coming were a matter of course. Make no protestations and at all events, prevent a scene."

"I assure you, doctor, I am deeply grateful for all you have said to me and I will endeavor to follow your instructions to the letter."

"All right, go in."

Karl had scarcely opened the door, when the general ran towards him, and holding out both his hands for a welcome, cried: "You remember our compact, young man, well, I have kept my word, I have sent for you, and I am very glad indeed you have responded so promptly."

The young soldier was astonished. Such a greeting he had not expected from Herr von Cannstatt. Looking around the room he noticed Helene on her sick bed. He was painfully amazed at that frail form, which his recent recollection pictured to him in all her youthful health and beauty, and who now lay before him almost wasted away. He was shocked for a moment, and wondering whether that was really Helene alive, or whether she were dead. But ever since he had entered, her eyes had been fixed upon him, now she looked up, opened her lips and smiled, while from her eyes shone forth a light which seemed to reflect the joy within her. Junker was overcome, and kneeling at the foot of the bed he buried his face in his hands, while bitter tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Do not cry, Karl, dearest," Helene said, trying hard to make her feeble voice heard. Now you have come, I am sure I shall get well again; you are the only physician who can cure my illness."

CHAPTER XV.

Junker's advent into the Cannstatt household produced a most remarkable effect upon everybody in it. Before he had been there two days, all sorrow, grief and anxiety about the much beloved patient had vanished from the countenances of all, who but a short while ago walked through the house with tearful eyes, expecting the news to come from the sick chamber at any moment, that the sweet young lady had died. His presence acted as a panacea for all the ills and sufferings, physical and mental, which, until Junker came, gave the place the resemblance of a hospital ward. The former whisperings of the servants were changed into laughter and pleasant small talk. The soft and noiseless tiptoeing, incidental to the presence of sickness, now gave way to a buoyancy of motion among the inmates of the house, which indicated despair had been driven out by re-

newed hope and confidence for the young lady's life.

As for General von Cannstatt, he seemed to have taken a new lease of life. It is but due him to say that, now he had made up his mind to condone Helene's love for Junker, he did everything in his power to make these two forget he had ever been opposed to it. When he heard it was the last day of Junker's service in the army, he was greatly delighted, and insisted upon Karl making the Cannstatt mansion his home until his return to his parents.

The idea of the young lady's death seemed to have disappeared from everybody's mind since Junker had been admitted into her presence. The effect of this worked wonders. The very sight of him she loved seemed to have wrought such a change over her, which rendered Helene almost completely transformed. She was now always cheerful, pleasant and talkative. That this change in her manner and condition produced some effect upon those surrounding her is of course natural. The faithful old doctor was especially delighted beyond conception, and to dispel all doubts as to the genuineness of his feelings, he said to Junker one day: "I am ready at any time to bow my acknowledgments to your superior skill in handling a case like this." However, even the nurses, usually grave and taciturn from their dreary, weary occupation, got an inspiration from the general change which seemed to have infused the whole household. They did what nurses rarely ever do, they smiled.

The dreaded evening, that was to have been the last on this earth for poor, suffering Helene, arrived and found her resting in a quiet, tranquil sleep, the first real restful hours she had had since the day she was taken ill. Dr. Hansen, who was in the room at the time, noticed it, and a smile of satisfaction stole over his good-natured countenance. He sent for the general, who came up hurriedly, looking greatly disturbed when he entered the room.

"Do not be alarmed, general," whispered the doctor, "look here; your daughter is asleep for the first time during her long and severe illness. Do you not think it was well worth our while to get this young man as a physician?"

"You are right, Hansen, it is a marvelous change, and this young fellow must be a real wizard. Do you know, I myself feel vastly different from what I did this morning. It seems as if I had a heavy load taken off my mind. There is a buoyancy I experience all over me, that makes me feel

almost young again ; and my rheumatism, why, I have not felt a twinge for six hours. And, do you know, I am beginning to like Junker for himself, and not alone because he saved my child's life. Of course, I cannot help being sorry that he is not a man of birth and family, but I have had a talk with him in my library, and would you believe it, he is quite intellectual. He can converse entertainingly upon any subject, history, the drama, political economy, art, the classics ; yes, just imagine, he is even well versed in the classics. I should never have believed that a farmer's son, a common soldier, could know anything about these things. It is perfectly astounding, and, by the way, he tells me that he is a lawyer by profession ; now, that certainly is better than if he were a tailor, or a shoemaker."

Thus the old gentleman kept on in his naive manner. He seemed to be speaking to himself, rather than the doctor, and he appeared to be hunting for excuses to himself, that he had done right, and that Junker, instead of being a nobody, was some one he had reason to be proud of.

"And Hansen," he continued, "did you ever see a handsomer man in your life? *Hol mich der Teufel*, he is a perfect Adonis ; if I were a girl I think I could fall in love with him myself." Suddenly his eyes noticed Helene's form moving in her sleep, and, walking softly to the bed, he said :

"My beautiful, beloved child, how peacefully she sleeps. Do you see that smile hovering around her lips? And to think that I could have been cruel enough to almost kill her. Ah, I am glad, and thankful to you, that you came to me this morning and aroused me at last to my duty. After all, of what value are the distinctions of aristocracy in comparison with a young life like hers?"

"They amount to nothing!" replied the doctor, with emphasis.

"Yes, yes, to be sure, and I never thought of that before." But he evidently was yet too fresh a convert to this doctrine, and he changed the subject.

"Hansen, what do you think of Helene now, when do you believe she will be well again?"

"It is hardly time yet to venture an opinion on that point, but the wonderful transformation her entire system seems to have undergone in the last few hours warrants me in saying it will not be long."

"Then you hold her to be out of danger?"

"Judging by all indications, yes, she is out of danger."

"I thank you, Hansen," and the general gave a sigh which indicated that this information greatly pleased him. He took hold of the doctor's hand and pressed it with fervor. They walked together out of the sick chamber down the stairs. Arrived at the door of the library, the general suddenly stopped, and turning around he laid his hand on Hansen's shoulder, and said, while his voice quivered with emotion :

"If my daughter had died, you would have been obliged to dig two graves at the same time ; I could not have survived her loss."

By order of the general, the certificates dismissing Junker from the army, as well as all his effects, had been brought to the house, and now Karl was once more a civilian. He took immediate advantage of this circumstance by taking off his uniform, and when Herr von Cannstatt noticed the change in his dress he gave him a look of approbation, which showed Karl that his thoughtfulness was appreciated.

When Doctor Hansen called on the following day, he found his patient greatly improved. He was now certain that she had started on the road of speedy convalescence to eventual recovery. Convinced of this, he had this bulletin immediately conveyed to the general, who received it with delight.

During the excitement of the last few days, the father had not thought of any one but his younger daughter, but now he suddenly remembered the Wuesthoffs, and he wondered, that he had not heard from them, and that they had not evinced the least interest in Helene's condition, because neither of them had been there to make any inquiries about her. He now sent for the colonel.

The latter was not aware of the turn of events, as far as Junker was concerned. The note which he received on the day of the parade was very enigmatical, and failed to enlighten him as to what was really wanted of the young man. He believed, however, that Lady von Cannstatt was dead, and when he dispatched the young soldier so promptly on his way, it was done in a spirit of fiendish satisfaction, because the thought of the young man's sorrow and disappointment at the end of his ride afforded Wuesthoff extreme pleasure. It never occurred to him that Helene was his wife's sister, and that she might probably be affected by

her death. Had he surmised the true state of affairs, it is doubtful whether he would have permitted the soldier to leave the ranks during parade.

The astonishment depicted upon Wuesthoff's countenance, after he had been informed by his father-in-law of the change, which had taken place in the relationship between himself and Junker, is easier imagined, than described. He threw up his hands and his face bore a look of holy horror.

"Good gracious general, and is it possible for you to tolerate the presumptuousness of such a fellow and allow him to pay his addresses to your own daughter?"

"Yes, colonel I have changed my mind about this young man, and to tell you the truth I am proud of having him as my future son-in-law."

"Well, by all that is monstrous, I am perfectly astounded. I cannot believe it. I must be deaf, or I have taken leave of my power of understanding, or else, pardon me general, you must be mad."

"No, I am not so any longer; but I was, when I withheld my consent for Helene to love this young man, and hazarded the life and happiness of my child, then I think I was mad."

"You simply amaze me. It is absolutely incredible. I—I cannot fathom it. A von Cannstatt to hold a young farmer, a common clown, worthy of making love to his daughter."

"Yes, it is true, a von Cannstatt has done such a thing and what is more, he does not regret it."

"Still you may."

"That the future will disclose. As far as such a probability is concerned, however, its chances would not be lessened were the young man of aristocratic descent."

"Come, come now, general you do not mean to level such an insinuation at me?"

"No, no, my dear fellow, it never occurred to me, but now I happen to think of it, the cap fits you to a nicety."

"Have I not made a good husband to your daughter?"

"Certainly as husbands go now a days. For a marriage that was determined upon without the consultation of either the wishes of yourself or my daughter it turned out as well as most marriages of that sort do. When your father and I arranged the match, however, we hoped for better results.

We were disappointed as you know, because you and Hortense are not what one would call a happily mated pair, are you?"

"But that is not my fault."

"Not altogether, yet still you are as much at fault as she is. Pah, I do not care about thrashing old straw. Listen to me: I am well aware, that I am committing a great breach of etiquette in permitting this attachment between Helene and Karl Junker. I am departing from the customs and traditions of my family in countenancing a commoner, a son of the people, as a lover of my daughter. The nobility will point the finger of scorn at me and call me a renegade. My approval will be branded as a disgrace, an insult to aristocracy and a blot upon my escutcheon. I shall henceforth be stigmatized and ostracised from the distinguished circle of high class society; but I am willing to bear it all, for I know that I have saved a budding rose from wilting before it bloomed, I have stemmed the tide of death on the brink of an untimely grave; in fact I have saved my child's life, who has been the sunshine of my declining days, and in whom has been concentrated whatever happiness I have had for many years."

"Pah! that is a very exaggerated view of the situation. Do you mean to have me infer Helene would have died, if you had not sent for this fellow and thereby giving your consent to her mad infatuation."

"Infatuation is not an appropriate term to be used in connection with Helene. She is not the kind of girl to become infatuated; but this I do know, she would have died had I not forgiven her and refused to send for Junker."

"Well, if I could have surmised that from the contents of your note, he should not have left the parade thi — —"

"Stop! Wuesthoff, you are forgetting yourself. Would you have disobeyed the order of your general and would you kill your wife's sister. What do you know against this young man?"

"Nothing, but I hate him with a deadly hatred. Mark you, that fellow shall never marry Helene so sure as I am a living man. I detest and despise the low-born rascal, who carries his head like a duke and affects the manners of a gentleman. You are now blinded by the false notion that it was necessary to recognize this fellow as her lover, in order to save Helene's life. It is an absurd mistake to allow

your gratitude to be carried to excess. Believe me she would not have died, anyhow. Girls do not die of love, and no gentle woman would die, because she was not allowed to love a common farmer. But it shall never be. Of course, while Helene is so very ill, there is no need to interfere. I have a plan and its effectiveness is infallible. Let me tell you. We will assume for the present, that we are all satisfied with the affair. We have in fact reconciled ourselves to the idea of having a farmer's son become the honored member of our family. But when Helene's health is restored, the fellow will have to be disposed of."

"What in this world do you mean?" the general interrupted him aghast with astonishment.

"Hm, is there not a likelihood of an accident to happen to anybody and at any time?"

"I do not understand you."

"Yet it is very simple I assure you. I have the plan, and I will see that it is executed without the least suspicion, who was at the bottom of it. Good heavens, a chap from the herd of peasants to marry a von Cannstatt, why it is monstrous. However, I am here, and I shall prevent it to save the honor of your noble name."

"There is a hidden meaning in all this talk of yours, Wuesthoff, and I must demand an explanation."

"Not at all necessary, the whole thing will explain itself. Well, I must be off; please convey my best wishes to Helene for her speedy recovery." With these words the colonel hurried away without giving the general a further opportunity to ask him any more questions. In the hall he passed Junker without taking the least notice of the young man.

"I will take care of you my fine rascal," Wuesthoff murmured to himself as he left the house. "A Wuesthoff's hatred is like the hunger of a lion and only blood can appease its rancor."

CHAPTER XVI.

When Wuesthoff left the Cannstatt mansion his mind was all in a whirl. It appeared impossible for him to grasp the situation in its reality. That the general should have given his consent to a match such as this, of a countess and a common fellow, passed his comprehension.

"And there is that countryman already comfortably installed as one of the family," he snarled through his teeth, as he walked homeward, "and by the ruins of Troy and Herculaneum the fellow carries himself, as if he were born in the place. How he looked at me when I passed him in the hall, so self-possessed, so dignified, confound him. Had he given himself the air of insolence, had he been overbearing in his mien, arrogant in manner and affected a kind of swagger, such as one is wont to see in the ordinary upstart, I should not have been surprised. But no, the scoundrel looks, acts, behaves and speaks, as if the bluest of aristocratic blue blood ran through his system. Oh, it is perfectly exasperating to think that such an imposter, which no doubt he must be, should have been able to hoodwink an experienced old soldier like my father-in-law. However, that makes my revenge all the more urgent. Even, if I did not hate the fellow for what he knows about me, even if I had not sworn to kill him to satisfy the personal grudge I entertain for him, I have to do it now to prevent the taking place of this proposed mesalliance. The consummation of that intended marriage would be a blot upon the entire German aristocracy! But how am I to get him out of the way, that is the question?" The colonel stood still to give the current of his thoughts full sway. His brows were contracted, his gaze was riveted to the ground, his teeth were vigorously gnawing away at the ends of his mustachios, while he pushed his hands deep into the pockets of his cloak. Suddenly he looked up with his eyes staring, as if he expected the subject of his thoughts before him.

"By the heavenly Diana, I have got it! To be sure, yes, what a delicious inspiration! Schinner, he is my man. Curious I did not think of him sooner. There isn't anything in the annals of crime which he would have scruples enough to shrink from, when I threaten him with dispossession of the house he lives in. That fellow is inordinately fond of his wife and his 'brats,' and when I work his affection for his family he will come to time. What a grand plan. I will send for him immediately."

During Junker's stay in the Cannstatt mansion he had a couple of unexpected but not unwelcome visitors. They were, it will not be surprising to hear, Frederic and Phillip, his two friends. When a servant made the announcement

of their arrival to Junker, he was so astonished that for a moment he was at a loss what to say or what to do with them. Not that he was ashamed of his friends; on the contrary, he was anxious to see them. Had he been anywhere else he would have run to the door to meet them, as if they were his brothers coming back to him after a long absence. But here it was different. He was receiving the hospitality of a stranger and an aristocrat, and he wondered how the general would look upon these visitors. He determined to find out by telling Herr von Cannstatt all about it.

"If he objects to them coming in here, I shall go out to them." Then he walked into the library, where he found the general sipping a cup of coffee and smoking his first long pipe of the morning.

"Herr von Cannstatt, two of my companions in the army have come to call upon me; have you any objections to my receiving them in your house?"

The general was too polite to hesitate with his answer for even a moment.

"Certainly not, Junker; your friends are always welcome here!" but while the young man expressed his thanks and gratification, the general seemed to lapse into meditation, and when Karl was about to leave the room, von Cannstatt said:

"Have you many barrack friends, who are likely to pay you a visit?"

Junker noticed the look of anxiety on the old gentleman's countenance, and he could not help being amused.

"No, general," he replied, "I have not. These two I have known since childhood; they are neighbors of mine. All three of us entered the army together, and as their time of service terminated with mine, I presume they are about to leave for home, and they desire to find out whether I am going with them."

"Ah, yes, I understand. Well, have them come in and entertain them, as if you received them in your own home. Give your orders to the servants for anything they might want. Would you like me to go and bid them welcome?"

"Thank you, general, I appreciate your kindness, but do not trouble yourself."

When Junker met his friends, their faces were ideal pictures of surprise and astonishment.

"By my sergeant's stripes!" was the greeting Phillip

gave him, "but you have made a very fine exchange of quarters."

"Yes," added Frederick, "from the barracks to the palace is certainly quite a jump."

The two young fellows were evidently pleased with their friend's good fortune, and congratulations flowed from their lips in the most voluble manner.

"To say we are glad," remarked Phillip, "is not doing justice to our real feelings, but we are, and there is no one in this wide world whom we think more deserving of becoming this grand young lady's husband, than you are."

"Are you not a little premature in your surmises? Your feelings of delight must be carrying you away too far."

"Now, do not be offended with us for talking so freely on a subject sacred to you," answered Frederick, "but we have been such close friends all our lives—there never were any secrets between us, you know,—and our hearts are so full of joy on account of your evident good fortune, that we cannot constrain ourselves, we must give vent to our feelings somehow."

"Don't apologize, boys, I am not offended, in fact I am now so happy, I have no right to be displeased with any one. The world was never so radiant to me, life never looked so hopeful, yet this wonderful good fortune still sits so new upon me, it is like a dream. I hesitate sometimes to think or speak of it, for fear that I might awake to find it a myth."

"H'm, there never was a more realistic dream in my life," remarked Phillip.

"By the way, have you seen the colonel, and what does he say?" asked the other.

"Yes, I did see him, but he did not speak to me."

"Well, it is not difficult to guess what he would say; he had never a good opinion of anything or anybody."

"Mark my word, Karl, there is a man who will cause you a great deal of trouble yet, and, if you take my advice, you will beware of him."

"It is a habit he has of hating everybody but himself."

If there is any truth in the old superstition, the colonel's ears must have burned pretty well during this conversation. Junker at last changed the subject. He asked them when they were going home.

"We are on our way now, but for how long we cannot tell; we may have to come back at any time."

"How is that?"

"Look in your papers, and you will see for yourself. The captain told us we were let off because affairs have been rather quiet of late, and things look now as if the mobilization is about to be abandoned. Still, the chances of a war with France are always probable, and of course in such an event we would be the first to be called upon."

"What a terrible idea it is," sighed Junker, "that civilized countries can not arrange their differences except at the expense of bloodshed."

"It is dreadful, no doubt," said Phillip, "but it has been the way of the world for so long, I am afraid it is too late for a change now."

"Not at all," interposed Karl, "in fact, I believe we are nearer the era of universal peace than ever."

This discussion was interrupted by a servant, who entered the room with a tray of very appetizing delicacies. The young men sat down and accepted Junker's invitation to enjoy themselves in a manner unique with the German soldier, who has been regaled on barrack fare for three years. They stayed with their friend for several hours.

"We must go now, the boat is ready to take us down the Rhine," at last intimated Frederick, looking at his watch, "but before we part, Karl, I want you to make the promise to let us know when you are coming home, in order that we may meet you at The Golden Swan. From there we want to accompany you into the village."

"I will do that with pleasure."

Then the two, after giving their friend a few vigorous handshakes, left, and Junker turned back into the house, waving his last adieus from the doorstep.

CHAPTER XVII.

Fraeulein von Cannstatt was now rapidly convalescing. Karl and the general both went to see her every day. In less than a week, the young lady, propped up with pillows in a rocking chair in her room, was able to receive her two visitors. For the lovers, this was quite an idyllic period of their courtship. After a while they began speculating as to the number of hours that would yet have to elapse before it

might be considered advisable to have the patient come downstairs. Dr. Hansen, now that he was confident Helene would soon be quite well again, did everything consistent with care and reason to make the stay in her room as agreeable as possible. He conducted his treatment of the case by allowing nature to take her own course, and whenever the young lady expressed a particular desire for any one thing, the doctor ordered it to be obtained for her, if possible. At last, all visible traces of the terrible sufferings Helene had gone through, seemed to have left her, and when she spoke to the physician of her desire to go downstairs, he gave his consent without hesitation. The old general watched her as she came walking down the stairs, leaning on the arm of Junker, and the sight made him feel as happy as a child that has found a long lost treasure. For days after this, Herr von Cannstatt would quietly steal into the room where the two lovers were sitting, and while he looked at them in deep contemplation, his eyes would light up with brightness and his face take on a glow of delightful pride, which spoke volumes as to the satisfaction he felt in his heart. And when he beheld the handsome, quiet, noble looking form of the young man, a smile stole over his countenance, which said plainly: "I might have waited a long time for an aristocratic son-in-law equal to this peasant lad."

The path of love for the two young people seemed now to be covered with nothing but roses, and the future could not have looked brighter for them. What was more natural, therefore, than the wish for a speedy consummation of their wedding? This suggestion was not only deemed advisable by sentimental reasons of their own, but the general prompted it himself. The dear old gentleman still felt the qualms of conscience, which told him that he had wronged these two with his harshness, and he constantly endeavored to make reparation for the undeserved pain he thought he had caused them. In addition, he had also grown immeasurably fond of Junker. During Helene's convalescence Karl had proved himself in many ways very useful to the lonesome old man. He read to him, talked to him, played cards and chess with him, and he even succeeded in inducing him to a game at billiards. The general had an excellent table in his house, but which had not been used for many years. Herr von Cannstatt was passionately devoted to the pastime, or at least, he had been so in his

youth, and he flattered himself to be quite a manipulator of the cue and ivories. In Junker he found quite an adept and opponent, who could hold him even. The result was that their contests were usually very interesting and productive of a great deal of amusement, especially to the elder man. In this way the young fellow had become quite indispensable to the general, and he had become more than reconciled to the idea of his daughter marrying a man from the people. He realized their love as honest, genuine, all-absorbing, and he recognized therein a premonition of a life of happiness for his daughter. In evolving the idea of a speedy marriage for the two, the old gentleman was also actuated by the least bit of selfishness, because he included resignation from active service for himself, and retirement to one of his castles in the "Black Forest" with his children. To carry this arrangement out, the general startled the two lovers one day by saying, in his own blunt soldier fashion:

"It appears to me that your cooing like a pair of turtle doves has been going on long enough, and it might be just as well to end this lovemaking by getting married."

Helene blushed to the roots of her hair, and Karl was too much surprised to be ready for a reply.

"Yes, I mean what I say," continued the general, "you can have my consent, if you want to get married tomorrow." Both remained speechless, and Herr von Cannstatt left them, wisely concluding, that he had better allow the discussion of his announcement to be carried on without him.

"Helene, what have you to say about this?" was Junker's question as soon as the general was out of earshot.

"I fear papa is inclined to precipitate matters," replied the young lady with a smile.

"But I coincide with his views exactly."

"You do? Really you surprise me, and what is your reason for such haste?"

"A very natural one, I can assure you."

"And will you tell me, dear Karl?"

"Because I love you, darling."

"But I love you too, and so well, that I would ask for nothing more, than to live like this, and have you near me always."

"Ah, I know, sweetheart, but to make you wholly mine, irrevocably, inseparably for ever, we must get married, it is the culmination of love, and therefore, I pray you let me

second your father's wish."

"Very well, as you both desire it, and as it is the pleasure of my life to always please you both, I will say: One month from to-day."

"Thank you, darling, you have made me the happiest man on earth," said Junker, taking Helene in his arms and kissing her again and again.

The two walked out of the room hand in hand to search for the general, and when they informed him of Helene's decision, he expressed himself greatly delighted. Later when the two men were alone the general imparted to Junker his plans.

"You are a lawyer by profession, and I am glad of it, because when you are married I shall have a great deal of work for you."

"And how is that?" asked the young man.

"I own several estates, which are scattered over the country, and the affairs of all of them have been entrusted to agents, who allowed them to greatly deteriorate in value. Now, I should like you to look into this, because I notice you are a man of business, and I am not. You can make yourself invaluable to me besides gain for yourself an excellent position."

"You must give me time to consider that proposition," replied Karl. "It was my intention to practice my profession in Cologne as soon as I had left the army."

"Yes, yes," the old general interrupted him impatiently, "but when you made those plans, you had no idea of marrying my daughter, and now that circumstances have changed I think you will have to change your plans as well. It seems to me that a man's knowledge should always be at the command of his friends first, and when I give you my daughter, you ought to do something for me in return."

"Herr von Cannstatt, your generosity overwhelms me. I can divine the reason, which prompts you to this offer, and I beg you to believe me, I shall do my utmost to merit the confidence you place in me. Here is my hand, whatever you may command I shall endeavor to fulfill to the best of my ability."

"That is settled then, when you are married you become my legal representative and the manager of my affairs. And you had better do your work well or I shall call you to account." There was a merry twinkle in his eyes, as the

general said this, and a smile around his lips, which showed he was well pleased with the arrangement.

"Very well, sir, I shall do my best to prove myself worthy of your confidence."

"Why Junker I know you will, or my daughter would not love you."

It was then arranged that Karl was to go to his home and stay with his parents until the wedding day, in order to give Helene ample time of preparation for such occupations as usually engage the attention of young ladies about to marry.

The day for Junker's departure had arrived. He was going to Cologne by boat up the Rhine, and from there to his destination in a stage coach, the railroad accommodations at that time being yet very imperfect.

When the boat was about to push off from the wharf there was quite an assemblage gathered to wish the young man bon voyage. Beside the general and Helene, the colonel and Lady von Wuesthoff were present. The latter had been with difficulty prevailed upon to condescend to this "degradation," as she called it, but a peremptory: "I desire you to go for reasons of my own," from the colonel induced her to attend. Lady Helene wished Karl an affectionate adieu, but if anyone expected a scene they were disappointed. Though her heart was sore, she controlled herself, in order, to make the separation easier for Karl.

At last the boat's whistle blew as a signal for its departure. Junker stood on the gang plank to go aboard when the colonel detained him for a moment.

"By the way, Junker," he remarked, "when 'he' gets home, I shall be glad, if 'he' will let me know of his safe arrival."

These words were accompanied by such a sickly attempt at smiling on the part of Wuesthoff, that showed they had a hidden meaning; but Junker affected not to notice this.

"All right, colonel," he replied. In the next minute he was aboard, and the boat started to steam gracefully down the river.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was not until Helene returned home, that she gave way to the grief of parting from her lover; but then she

could not retain her self possession any longer. The gates of sorrow opened into a vale of tears. She did not attempt to combat this display of weakness, and she felt the better for a good cry, which with her, as it usually does with women, acted as a sort of safety valve, affording considerable relief. Gradually the tears subsided, she grew quieter, and her feelings resolved themselves into a quiet, calm, a sublime resignation.

"I will fret no more, he has gone away only to return again, in order that we may never part for evermore." In this thought she sought and found consolation.

But she was not the only person in the Cannstatt household, who missed the presence of the pleasant young man. Everybody was sorry for Karl's departure, and the general especially began already to look anxiously forward to Junker's return, before he had gone many hours.

Lady von Cannstatt by way of diverting her mind, immediately sent for dressmakers and milliners for the purpose of commencing the making of her various wedding gowns, and on the following day the "rough edge" of her grief was smoothed into a partial forgetfulness by selecting the material for her trousseau.

Messengers were dispatched to Frankfort on the Main to bring the best dressmaker that could be found. Junker had hardly reached his destination, when his lady love was already in the hands of a first-class "tailleur aux dames," who was bent upon making her the most beautiful looking bride that ever stood before the altar in a Mayence church.

On the following day, when, according to arrangement she was to receive a message of Junker's safe arrival at his home, an incident occurred, which was calculated to break her heart and throw once more gloom over her young life.

It happened in the afternoon, the young lady and her father were chatting very pleasantly about Helene's approaching wedding day. Fraeulein von Cannstatt suddenly remarked she had not yet received a message from Karl. "It seems strange," she said, "he has not sent me a dispatch."

"Oh, I do not know, perhaps some trivial delay," replied the general, "and then this new-fangled affair, the telegraph, is a very unreliable system anyhow. You need not feel alarmed. The young fellow is all right. I never saw anyone better capable of taking care of himself. Like all

girls in love you are a little over anxious my dear child, you"— — —

There was a knock at the door and a servant announced "Colonel von Wuesthoff," who, immediately following the lackey, entered the apartment.

"Welcome, colonel, what brings you here, it is not often these walls have harbored you of late."

This was the way the old nobleman greeted his son-in-law, as he got up and shook hands with him.

"Hm, I did not think, that I was particularly wanted here, while 'the Apollo of the Barracks' was your guest."

"I do not know, why you should say that, when you did not come here to find out. However, if you have made your appearance only for the purpose of exhibiting an uncalled for sarcasm, it is a pity you did not stay away a little longer," icily replied the general.

"I can assure you I did not come of my own inclination even now, but because I am compelled to be the bearer of intelligence, which may be of interest to you both."

"Something of interest to us both," echoed Helene, then jumping from the feauteuil, she ran towards the colonel, crying.

"Then it is something about Karl. Tell me for pity's sake what is it, do not keep me in suspense?"

"I would prefer to speak to your father first, and he can impart the matter to you if he chooses."

"Good heavens, and does your information, if it is about him, concern anyone more, than myself. Ah, why will you persist to torture me so, have you no mercy, no feeling for anyone, is he ill?"

"No. I do not think he is ill, but there,—I do not want to discuss this with you; if you will be kind enough to withdraw, I shall tell your father all."

"I will not move from here until I have heard what you have to say. It is, I can see, some base insinuation, some slander against him."

"Nothing of the kind, dear Helene, you are simply jumping at conclusions," rejoined the colonel with a contemptuous smile on his lips, "but if you will not leave us," turning to the general, "I propose we leave her, the subject is one, which should be broached gently to her."

Herr von Cannstatt was in a dilemma. Had he been cognizant of the errand on which his son-in-law came he

might have easily determined what to advise. While he was yet considering as to how he ought to influence his daughter, she said:

"I shall not allow you to say anything about Karl without my being present to defend him. I am not a child any longer. I am a woman and the affianced bride of the man, whom you have come to villify because you hate him, though why I do not know.

"My dear Helne, you do not know what you are saying, I am sorry for you, but you cannot have the least idea as to what I am here for, or you would not attack me in this manner. Many a man with a mission like mine would shrink from the task of performing it, but I consider it my duty. Didn't you hear me just now stating the news ought to be broached gently to you?"

The colonel uttered these words, as if he enjoyed the spectacle of tantalizing the young lady with his mystery, nor did he betray the least seriousness. This caused the general to end the affair in this way.

"Well, since Helene desires to hear the news about Junker, and since I believe, that she has the best right to hear what is said regarding him, please let us know."

"I have received a telegraphic message containing news from him."

"Is it a message referring to his health?"

"Yes, but I would prefer not to say any more, the consequences be on your head, if you insist further, general."

Helene, who had been thoughtfully watching the colonel, suddenly interrupted him.

"I understand it all now," she remarked. "You have come with some horrible story by which you hope to effect a termination of my engagement with Junker. I know you have not a scintilla of feeling of compassion for anybody, and it has been your aim ever since you have known of our love to frustrate this marriage between Karl and myself. Now that you see yourself foiled you have come to play your last trump. It is mean and contemptible and no one but yourself would resort to such tricks. However, whatever you may say I feel it cannot be the truth."

Again that sardonic sneer appeared on Wuesthoff's lips, as he replied.

"Very well, since you will not believe me anyhow, it cannot matter to you what I do say. I have a message,

received an hour ago, saying, that Karl Junker died, while on his way home."

"It was a cruel blow, and it struck home." With a cry that seemed to tear Helene's heart, she fell back into the arms of her father. The old man, himself overcome by this information gently laid his daughter upon a sofa and kneeling beside her he cried, as if his own heart were breaking too.

Von Wuesthoff stood there with a ghastly, fiendish grin on his countenance, from which it seemed evident he relished the effect his words had produced. He made not the least effort to come to the assistance of the general, who did what he could to revive Helene from the shock her nerves had received by the unexpected news about him she loved. The colonel, as if satisfied with the work he had accomplished, at last turned around and left the apartment. In the hall he told the servant to go into the room. Then Wuesthoff left the house, and as the heavy door closed behind him, he indulged in a little soliloquy.

"How she defied me, the young vixen, and would not believe anything I might say. Hah, hah, but she did believe me after all. There is no doubt, though, that girl loves this fellow almost to distraction. What a pity it is, to be sure; she has enough beauty and spirit to turn anybody's head. And if I did not love her myself I might be satisfied to see her marry some one else. But this peasant chap! No! I would have shot him at the altar, sooner than permit it. However, I daresay it is all over now. They will find out in a day or so that he is dead. Then there will be a few weeks' mourning, and after that my beautiful Helene will have forgotten all about her handsome young Adonis. Well, I have achieved my object. I have saved her from disgracing herself, her name and her family."

Helene had in the meantime recovered from the first effects the sudden revelation had upon her, and under the efforts at consolation made by her father she gradually regained her former calmness. When she observed that the colonel had disappeared a sigh of relief escaped her.

"Thank goodness," she whispered, "he has gone." Noticing the servant she motioned him out of the room. Alone with her father, she put her arms around him and kissed his furrowed, wrinkled cheeks over and over. All at once she rose from the sofa and placed her hand to her

forehead, as if she were trying to hold a check over her thoughts. And why did she do this? An idea had flashed across her mind so wonderful, it seemed to her almost like an inspiration. She maintained this standing posture for sometime, apparently lost in deep meditation. Suddenly she turned around, facing her father, her eyes literally dancing with delight, and a tone of voice that sounded like the words of a prophetess, she exclaimed:

"Papa, dearest, do not let us be alarmed. Every word Wuesthoff said was a fabrication and a falsehood. Karl Junker is not dead. I am positive he is not dead!"

For a moment the old nobleman did not answer. He was not sure that he had heard aright. But when his daughter repeated her assertion, he shook his head.

"Ah, child, you are a brave and hopeful young girl, but I am afraid he did tell the truth. He could not lie about such an awful thing as that. It would be inhuman to trump up such a story."

"Nevertheless I maintain that Karl is still alive. It is my positive conviction. Look at me, do you suppose I could stand here so quietly and discuss such a question without the least emotion, if I were not absolutely certain in my mind that Karl lives. Were his death a reality I would feel it in my heart by instinct, by intuition; but I do not harbor the least dread or fear. What induced Wuesthoff to come here and tell us such a horrible thing is more than I can say. Still, I know he did not tell the truth."

The general looked at his daughter in amazement. Had she lost her reason? To him there was no doubt as to the correctness of Wuesthoff's announcement. Junker was dead. It was sad and he was grieved beyond expression. What object could his son-in-law have in concocting such an awful fabrication? None at all. Helene's behavior puzzled him, and the emphatic manner in which she asserted that Junker had not died; in fact, was still alive, bewildered him. While he was yet brooding over it, Helene burst out:

"Papa, dear, I have a great favor to ask, will you grant it?"

"Whatever it is child, I will do it, if I can."

"Thank you, papa, I know you can. Let us quietly leave Mayence at once, without apprising anyone where we are going. Then let us take the boat down the Rhine and

go to Karl's home. I dare say you will think my idea an extraordinary one, but I am so thoroughly imbued with the feeling that he is alive and well, I want to take you to him and prove the correctness of my assertion."

"Very well, Helene, although I cannot share your belief, still I hope and pray that you are right. I am ready to go whenever you are."

Preparations for the journey were quickly completed and in a very short time General and Lady von Cannstatt were on their way to Winterthal in the "Bergische Lande," the home of Karl Junker.

CHAPTER XIX.

A steam boat ride on the Rhine from Mayence to Cologne is one of the most delightful trips anyone can desire. It is one of the events of one's life time, the pleasure of which will never be forgotten, and the beauties of nature will leave an impression on one's mind which time cannot efface.

There are many beautiful rivers in the world, there are numbers of them, the banks of which are garlanded with miles upon miles of picturesque, romantic scenery; but after all there is but one Rhine. Apart from the mountains, the gorgeous forests, the ever-varying panorama of idyllic grandeur, virginal wildness of glens, ridges and inaccessible cliffs, there is this unique charm about the Rhine scenery, over it all there hovers a mist of the mysterious, the supernatural in the form of legends, fables, traditions and fairy tales, which intensify the interest a millionfold.

To Junker, the beauties of the passing scenery, however, did not appeal on this occasion. As a German he was proud of the river. All Germans love the Rhine as an inseparable part of the fatherland. In fact, there could not be a Germany without the Rhine. Karl had made the trip often and often, and yet every time he found something new to attract and enchant him. But to-day it was different. He was preoccupied with the radiant picture of his bride, and there was no room for anything else to engage his thoughts. By the time the steamer had got properly under way he had found a secluded spot on deck, where he settled himself to enjoy the "bliss of meditation's fancy." He had hardly made himself comfortable in his seat, when someone suddenly addressed him,

"Excuse me, sir, are you bound for Cologne?"

Junker looked up. Before him stood a person dressed in the garb, characteristic of the inhabitant of the "Black Forest."

"Yes,," replied Karl, "I am going to Cologne, and farther even."

"To Wesel?"

"Oh, no. I leave the boat at Cologne and travel from there by the "Post-wagen" into the "Bergische"

"H'm, that is singular. I am going in the same direction. I am a woodenware peddler, and I have been told the Bergische is a good market for our ware."

"My home is in the Bergische, and may be I can be of some assistance to you in disposing of your goods quickly."

"You are very kind, sir, but I thank you, I have a friend living on the highway between Cologne and Dueseldorf to whom I am going, and I expect he will put me in the way to sell my ware."

"That is nice. Well, my destination leads me for quite a distance over your road, hence we shall be traveling companions."

"Yes, that we shall. I am very glad to have met you, sir, and I hope you will excuse me for having accosted you, because I fear I interrupted some very pleasant thoughts when I addressed you."

Junker was astonished. He did not know until now, that the evidences of his thoughts were so plainly visible on his countenance, that even a Black Forest woodenware peddler might read them.

"Oh, no apology is necessary, he replied, "those thoughts will keep. They will recur to me again."

But the other did not seem to care for staying any longer in the young man's society. "I will see you again, when we leave the boat in Cologne," he remarked, as he, walked down the steps to the salon.

The steamer reached the "City of smells" in due time and without any accident. Junker had forgotten all about his new acquaintance, and he strode towards the landing not paying the least attention to anybody. The peddler however, appeared to have been possessed of a better memory, for at the same moment Karl stepped ashore the other with his basket on his back, was alongside of him.

"Well, sir, here we are," he said, "and as I am not familiar with the locality about the wharf, or where our "Post wagen" starts from, perhaps you will not mind if I follow you?"

"Ah, yes, it is you, to be sure, I am sorry that I had forgotten, but come along, we shall not have far to go."

They soon arrived at the "Gasthof zum Rheingau." As the coach was scheduled to make connections with the Rhine boat, the travelers were not kept waiting. It was now four o'clock in the morning and the "Post" ready to depart any minute. Junker and his recently found traveling companion deposited their luggage with the driver. By the time the postilion had blown his horn and cracked his whip to signal the horses to go ahead, the passengers, of whom six occupied the inside of the coach, were all snugly seated and resigned to their journey over the "Landstrasse."

The "Post" was due at the "Golden Swan" at eight o'clock in the morning. Junker had written when he might be expected, and he was now anxiously looking forward to the end of his ride, because he felt sure his two friends, Frederick and Philip, would be there to receive him. The ride was awfully tiresome. The coach was not particularly comfortable, the travelers were all too tired to talk, albeit they could not go to sleep in such a ramshackle conveyance as this "express wagen" of the "Koenigliche Preussische Postamt." The man from the Black Forest appeared to be the least inconvenienced by the trying accommodations of the vehicle, and he was seemingly soon asleep. Karl, however, remained awake. Now that he was so near his home, his anxiety to see his parents, the scenes of his boyhood days and all his friends, made him restless. When the morning dawned over the landscape, and he looked through the little glass panes, which served as windows to the wagon, he was delighted to recognize the familiar surroundings, indicating that he would soon be within the boundaries of his native heath. Almost every tree, bush and house recalled to his mind some incident of his youth, and he had fallen into a kind of drowsy reverie of his boyhood recollections, when suddenly the red shingles on the roof of the "Golden Swan" shone in the morning sun through the trees. The coach gave a lurch to one side, the sound of the postilion's horn re-echoed in crackling tones from the adjoining hills, a voice hollowed: "Hea, hea," the

horses stopped, the door of the wagon was pulled wide open and there stood Frederic and Phillip, who with an expectant stare looked around for their friend.

"Well, Karl, here you are, welcome old fellow, glad to see you again. No use asking you how you are, you look the picture of health." These were the greetings uttered by both at the same time, after they had recognized him and almost literally dragged him out of the vehicle in their eagerness to shake him by the hand.

"Yes, I am all right, but tired and hungry. How is mother, father, and everybody else in the village?"

"Just as you left them. Nobody has been sick in Winterthal for the last ten years, and the only person who died was Dr. Pillendreher. He, poor fellow, succumbed to a broken heart and in positive disgust, because the people were not condescending enough to give him a chance to make a living."

While the young men were exchanging these pleasant-ries and alleged jokes all the other passengers looked at the trio in mute astonishment, but the face of the man from the Black Forest bore a different aspect. He seemed to be disturbed about something and a far away stare came into his eyes as he saw the two fellows talking to his erstwhile traveling companion. There was something on his mind, which seemed to cause him a great deal of trouble.

The "Post" stopped at the "Golden Swan" to change horses and give the passengers time for breakfast. Junker, who had not eaten anything since leaving Mayence, decided to test the culinary ability of the cook at the "Swan" himself, before completing his journey, a walk of about half an hour off the "Landstrasse."

Fredric and Phillip had anticipated their friend, however, in the matter of breakfast, and when he walked into the hostelry he was directed to a private room, where a table invitingly awaited him. Suddenly he remembered his friend from the boat.

"By the way, boys," he said, turning to his comrades "I made the acquaintance of a peddler from the Black Forest coming down on the boat from Bingen. He seems a nice fellow, and if you have no objection I should like to invite him in to breakfast."

"No, of course not, although one would hardly expect the future husband of the Lady von Cannstatt making

friends with Black Forest peddlers," laughingly remarked Phillip.

"I do not see why that should make any difference. However, let me call the man to come in."

Phillip found the peddler in the barroom, and when he was informed of the wish expressed by Karl, he accepted the invitation with a readiness, which indicated he must have expected it.

"Sit down and do justice to the cook of the 'Golden Swan,'" said Junker, offering the man a chair, "you will find here a breakfast as good, if not better, than you can get anywhere in these parts."

While Fredric and Phillip walked around the room and made themselves busy with their friend's baggage the two traveling companions partook of the broiled steak and the fried potatoes with evident relish. There was very little said by either. Junker attempted several times to draw his guest into a conversation, but the peddler appeared to be preoccupied. His eyes were constantly wandering around the room, now dwelling upon Karl or else following the movements of the two young men. All at once, Frederic and Philip had a moment ago stepped out of the room, while Junker noticing a dog under the table stooped down to give the animal a morsel of meat, the man from the Black Forest got up. With feverish haste he put his hand in his pocket and drew from it a small piece of paper, neatly folded together. Quickly he tore off one end and leaning across the table he emptied the contents of the paper into Junker's coffee. It was all done in less time than it takes to tell, but yet the peddler had not been quick enough. Even before he had accomplished his object, the door opened and Frederic stood upon the threshold. The man at the table looked up, their eyes met. Their was an expression so fiendish, so diabolical in the peddler's face, it involuntarily caused the young man to stand still wondering what it meant. Then the actions of the other again passed before his mind as in review and he understood it all. In the meantime Karl had returned to his breakfast unmindful of the fact, that his guest had tampered with his coffee. Taking up the cup he was about to put it to his lips when Frederic jumped forward. With a bound he had reached the table, and in his attempt to prevent Junker from drinking he almost knocked the cup from his hand.

"For heavens sake, Karl, do not drink that coffee, this fellow has tried to poison you," he cried.

Junker was dumbfounded. This information struck him like a revelation. The peddler shook in his chair trembling like an aspen with fear and convulsions; not a word came from him in refutation of the horrible accusation. At this moment Phillip came in. In a few words Frederic apprised him of what had occurred. He bade him take charge of the cup and run with it as quickly as possible to the apothecary, who fortunately lived not far away. Phillip half dazed mechanically picked up the cup and ran from the apartment.

Karl had in the meantime regained his self-possession. He did not seem to realize the seriousness of the affair. No matter how he reasoned he could find no explanation, why this man should want to poison him. Hence he believed his friend must have been mistaken.

"What have you to say to my friend's charge?" he addressed the peddler.

But the latter had also taken advantage of the last few minutes to shake off his too apparent excitement.

"It is a lie, a damned lie, and I will go to the nearest police authority to get protection, that fellow,—pointing to Frederic—is crazy!"

Frederic laughed. I am crazy, eh?—I have no doubt that for your sake it would be well, if I were. However, I have an idea, that I never was more sane in my life, than at this instant, in fact I am just sane enough to insist upon your staying in this room until Dr. Krebs has favored us with the result of his analysis of that cup of coffee."

The three now observed a strict silence. It was too evident from the manner of indignation assumed by the peddler, the charge made against him, had more of foundation in fact than he cared to admit. He took another precursory look around the room, glanced at the windows, then at the door and then at the two young men. While he showed it in his face that he would have been glad to make his exit from the apartment he was not slow in recognizing, that any attempt at departure without the approval of these two friends would prove futile. He determined to put on an air of bold defiance, kept his seat at the table and remarked :

"Very well, I will stay here until your friend comes

back with the apothecary to clear me of your silly suspicion; but mark my word you will suffer for the wrong you are doing me. No man can make such infamous allegation against another with impunity."

"All responsibility is mine!" ironically replied Frederic with a wave of his hand.

Junker sat there like a man lost in thought. Although incredulous at first, he was too well acquainted with his friend to mistake his positive manner. The latter had been an eyewitness of the peddler's actions, and his accusations were too emphatic to be questioned. Yet withal Junker could not for the life of him think why he should have been the object of a murderous attack from this stranger of the Black Forest. He had never seen him until yesterday, and from the moment they had met, Karl had been kind, obliging, courteous and friendly to him. Altogether the affair was too singular and inexplicable. The thought recurred to him again that after all Fred must have been mistaken. He called the latter to him and whispered.

"Had you not better let the man go? I am sure you are wrong. Why should he want to poison me? Perhaps he was only putting some sugar in my coffee thinking I had forgotten to do it myself."

"Sugar?" asked the other with a smile. "Why then did he not take it from the bowl on the table instead of his pocket. I have never heard of people going about the country with sugar done up in small powders."

"But be reasonable. Why on this earth should this man want to kill me, I never saw him in all my life until yesterday."

"Where did you meet him?"

"On the boat," and then Junker related the details of his journey as far as the stranger was connected with them. "You can now see for yourself," he concluded, "that my death cannot be of the least importance to him."

"That is all very well," and your arguments sound quite plausible," retorted Frederic, "still I will swear, I saw this man put something in your cup, which he knew had no business there. The very actions of the fellow, while he was doing it are the best circumstantial evidence that he meant to poison you. I read murder in his eye when I surprised him in the act."

"But how do you explain it?—there is reason in all things."

"That is where I am still in the dark. I am not able to explain his motive, but he can do that, and by heavens I shall not let him out of my sight until I have found out."

"Ah, do not be so hard on the poor devil. After all he has not done me any harm, even if as you say, he did intend to poison me. You see I did not drink any of the stuff, so you might as well let him go."

"No, go he shall not. He called me a liar and no man ever did that without discovering in the end to be one himself. I shall keep this fellow in custody until he has made a confession. You say the man can have no personal object in seeking your death, but is there not the possibility for him to be the tool, doing somebody elses bidding."

"I do not think my life can be of sufficient importance to anyone, to pay for the hire of a murderer to take it. Still you have foiled this man's attempt, hence he is harmless."

Still Frederic was inexorable. He refused to let the peddler escape before his charge had either been substantiated or contradicted by the apothecary's analysis of the coffee. The two friends were still arguing this point when the door opened and Phillip returned, accompanied by the worthy Krebs.

"Well, what is the result?" both asked simultaneously, while the peddler feverishly clung to the chair, his eyes on the apothecary, as if he were trying to penetrate his mind and read his thoughts before he had time to utter them.

"There is sufficient arsenic in this cup," slowly but decisively remarked Herr Krebs, "to have killed twenty-five men, and hearing that you were about to drink this, Junker, allow me to congratulate you upon your narrow escape from a horrible death, while at the same time I am glad of the opportunity of welcoming you home again."

The man from the Black Forest groaned with fear when he heard this. His defiant manner had vanished, and he now represented a most pitiful personification of abject dread, and misery.

"Do you hear that, you scoundrel, you called me a liar not long ago, may be you are willing to change your opinion, especially with the prospect of appearing before a magistrate!" exclaimed Frederic with the least bit of triumph in his voice.

"Have mercy, have mercy, gentlemen, I will confess everything," cried the wretched man, falling literally on his

knees before them all and holding up his hands imploringly.

"That is right," Karl addressed him. "Tell us the whole truth. I am almost certain you did not want to murder me from personal animosity, and am anxious to find out, who it is that wishes my death."

CHAPTER XX.

"Yes, gentlemen, I will tell you all," whimpered the miserable man still retaining his praying posture on the floor. "To begin with I must admit that I am not a peddler from the Black Forest, as I led you to believe. No! I am a resident of Mayence, have lived there the greater part of my life. I have never committed a crime in my life nor attempted to commit one until now, and I am more sorry, than I can tell for allowing myself to be tempted this time. For that reason I am delighted my plan has not been successful, and though I feel certain, poverty and misfortune will be my future lot, I shall bear it with resignation, because I shall not have your death on my conscience. Now for my story.

I am a cobbler by trade, and I have lived in Mayence in a little house, which with a number of others alongside of it, was recently purchased by Colonel von Wuesthoff, a nobleman with whom you are all acquainted I believe."

"Yes, he is unfavorably known to us," Phillip remarked with a smile.

"After the colonel became the owner, he sent an agent to me one day and gave me notice, that I would either have to pay more rent or quit the premises. This was a hard blow to me. I have a large family of children, and it is quite a task for me to earn enough at my trade to make a living. To find more money for rent, than I was already paying, I knew would be an impossibility for me. Still I was loath to leave the place, because by going away I would lose what little trade I had and have to commence all over again. I expostulated with the agent and told him the situation I was in. But he was immovable. He merely shrugged his shoulders and replied, that he could not help me. He had his orders and must obey them. I was disconsolate. Starvation for myself and family stared me in the face, whichever way I looked. At last I bethought

myself of going to see the colonel personally. "If I explained to him the condition of my family," so I argued, "I dare say I shall move him to reconsider his decision, and perhaps he may let me stay where I am, without increasing his demands for rent. No sooner had I formed this idea, than I set about carrying it out. I went to the colonel's house, where I was received none too graciously, but of course, considering his exalted position, as a nobleman. I could not expect anything else. When I made him acquainted with my errand he simply laughed in my face.

"It is none of my business," he said, "whether 'he' lives, or not, whether 'he' starves, or whether 'his' family goes to the poorhouse, or to the grave, what do I care. I own the house 'he' lives in, and 'he' will either have to pay me what I want or else get out."

I was dumbfounded at his callous display of heartlessness. I plead and plead again to have him relent from his severity, but I could not say anything to make him change his decision. I was about to turn and leave in complete despair, when he called me back.

"Does 'he' like the home 'he' lives in?" the colonel asked me.

"Yes, your honor," I replied, "I have lived there for 25 years, all my children were born there, I was married in the house, and to me it is the pleasantest place in the world."

"But why did 'he' not buy it 'himself'?"

"A cobbler does not make enough money to enable him to buy houses, especially when he has a large family."

"I suppose 'he' would like to own such a house?"

"It is the height of my ambition."

"Very well 'he' shall have the whole place, own it in fee simple, if 'he' will do as I tell 'him.'"

This sudden announcement set my brain reeling; my head felt all afire, I could scarcely believe I had understood him, and I said so to the colonel.

"Yes I mean what I say. 'He' shall have the house, the garden and everything belonging to it, provided 'he' will do what I say."

"What is it?" I asked, "and I will do it."

"I have an enemy in this city," calmly remarked Herr von Wuesthoff, "and I want to get him out of the way. I desire 'him' to help me in accomplishing this.

Acquiesce and the house is 'his.'

This proposition took me nearly of my feet, and the coolness with which he propounded the matter almost bereft me of my senses.

"I see 'he' hesitates," the colonel remarked, arousing me from my silent astonishment. "All right, 'he' is not the man I am looking for. I shall keep my house, and 'he' can go and starve with 'his' family as quickly as he chooses.

"But colonel," I ventured to say, when he cut my speech short.

"No butting with me, 'he' has heard what I have offered 'him.' 'He' either will do my bidding or else 'he' will not. In the one case I keep the house, and 'he', and 'his' wife and 'his' children can perish, while on the other hand the house is 'his,' 'he' pays no more rent, lives well, brings up his family in good circumstances, and 'he' will make 'his' family happy, that's all. I have nothing further to do with 'him,' and with these words he showed me the door.

I went home, the colonel's proposition humming in my ears like a hive of bees. Day and night the temptation haunted me. In my dreams, I saw conjured before me the most fantastic pictures of wealth and riches. Awake, imagination lent such wings to my thoughts, as to almost drive me crazy. It was a terrible temptation to a man like me. I was as poor as a churchmouse, living with my wife and family in dire want, and constantly dreading the appearance of the agent to turn us out into the streets. Nevertheless the qualms of conscience occasionally tortured me with the thought, "it is better to starve an honest man than to die a rich criminal." Then again the voice of the tempter would whisper in my ears, "What does it matter about one human life when you save your wife and all your children. At such times I resolved to go and tell the colonel I was ready to obey his command. Occasionally a voice of caution would say: "Supposing you were found out?" and then such fears overcame me, I determined to die sooner than become a murderer.

This last resolution had about gained the upperhand in my mind, when one day the agent of the colonel came in and informed me, that on the following morning I must vacate the premises. In case I refused he threatened to call the police to his aid. Of course you all know when it

comes to a question of right or wrong between the nobility and the people the latter get always left. I listened to the mandate from my landlord without saying a word. So far I had kept the entire affair to myself, because I did not want to give my wife needless worry. When the agent had gone, however, I realized, I could not keep the impending trouble from her any longer, and I told her. If I had been affected by the terrible outlook for our future, my wife was even more so; and when I saw her mental anguish her tears, her prayers for her children, realizing at the same time, that I might change this misery into joy and happiness,—then—I sank beneath the burden of temptation. Picking up my hat and coat I hurried away from the house. For fear I might again change my mind I ran as fast as I could, and never stopped until I reached the colonel's residence.

"I will do all you ask me," I burst out, and then fell exhausted into a chair.

"I am delighted to notice 'he' has changed 'his' mind," Herr von Wnesthoff remarked without taking the least notice of my emotion. "Now listen 'he' to me very attentively, and I shall give 'him' 'his' instructions. There is a young man in this city, whom I desire to have put out of the way. This young man's name is Karl Junker."

"You appear to have a great knack in torturing your audience when you tell a story," here interrupted Frederic. "Now we knew that this was coming, and my heart has been going like a ten-day clock for the last ten minutes expecting you to say this, but go on, you are telling a good story."

The pseudo peddler, without taking the least notice of this little display, continued, addressing himself to Junker directly:

"The colonel pointed out to me that you were about to leave Mayence for your home, and that it would be a good idea for me to go away on the same boat, make your acquaintance; in short, attach myself to you on the journey. I was particularly advised to delay the administration of the poison until we were about to part, for the reason that it would be more difficult to find me in case the deed was traced to me. I was to return home without delay. After he had given me all these instructions, I was told where I could find you. In fact, the colonel pointed you out to me

one day himself as the man I was to kill. All these details completed, he drew up a deed of the house, made it out to me, and turning toward me he said:

“‘Now, the compact is settled. I will keep this deed in my desk here, and on the day that ‘he,’ Nicolaus Schirmer, returns to Mayence and assures me of Karl Junker’s death, this deed will be handed over to ‘him,’ making the house and lot ‘he’ lives in at present ‘his’ own property. In the meantime, until ‘he’ starts on ‘his’ mission, ‘he’ may stay there and no one shall molest ‘him.’”

“When I told my wife that I had made arrangements with the owner of the house by which we might remain in it, the dear woman cried with joy. Her delight knew no bounds, and I must admit this somewhat reconciled me to my bargain with Herr von Wuesthoff.”

“On the day of your departure, yesterday morning, the colonel sent for me. He handed me this suit of clothes, and told me to introduce myself as a peddler from the Black Forest; in fact, he instructed and directed me in everything regarding the plans for your murder. Then he gave me this well-filled purse, and wishing me good luck and god-speed on my trip, he remarked:

“‘When ‘he’ returns the deed for the house awaits ‘him.’”

“The rest, sir, you know, because we have been together almost constantly ever since. I will not go into the details of my sufferings on the journey. You have been extremely kind to me, and the longer I was with you the more difficult my task became. I was possessed by a fit of indecision, which at one moment urged me to fulfill my compact with the colonel, while in another minute I resolved to return home and brave the storm of poverty. But when you called me into breakfast not long ago all fears were suddenly allayed. The voice of conscience seemed to be dead. No better opportunity could I have wished in attempting to poison you, than to be sitting with you at the table. To me it seemed as if the finger of Providence had written your doom, and when I entered it was with the avowed determination of murdering you with this poison. That is all. I have no more to say. I was found out. You can do as you please. Whatever that will be, I deserve it all. My punishment cannot be too severe. God help my wife and children.”

CHAPTER XXI.

Karl Junker, his two friends, and even the apothecary, were perfectly amazed at the story they had been listening to. Although Colonel Wuesthoff had never stood very high in the estimation of either of the three young men, it is safe to say that Junker, at all events, had not supposed his character could sink to the level of an assassin. As for this man Schirmer, Junker pitied him. For a person who was so fond of his wife and children, the temptation of the colonel was an offer which could not be easily refused. It was a question with him of wiping out the life of a man whom he did not know, and thereby preserving those of his own flesh and blood. Was it to be wondered at that he would endeavor to save them at all hazards? It was on this point, in singling out for his tool a man in such circumstances and the condition of Schirmer, where the dastardly conduct of Wuesthoff especially showed itself. Of course Junker deprecated all crime and even criminal intentions on the part of Schirmer, and though he did not want to justify the peddler's action entirely, he nevertheless could not help thinking that his share was at least deserving of extenuation.

"What is to be done now?" at last interrupted Frederic, breaking the silence which seemed to overhang the room like a funeral pall.

Philip shrugged his shoulders, while Junker shook his head, but the chemical expert, an old gentleman and evidently accustomed to all phases of life, turned to the man from Mayence and asked him:

"Did you have any understanding with Colonel Wuesthoff that in case you were successful he was to be immediately apprised of the fact?"

"Our agreement was for me to telegraph him, if I was not successful, but if all went as anticipated to remain silent until I came home again."

"That is fortunate!"

"Why?" asked Junker.

"Because, if you prevent this man from telegraphing, the colonel, by this time, believes you to be dead. He will think himself secure, while you can go up to Mayence and make every arrangement for his arrest, without him even dreaming that his nemesis is about to overtake him."

"Yes, that is all true enough, but I am not yet sure that I desire to have anyone punished in this matter."

"Oh, but you cannot help yourself," declared Frederic, "the law demands it. You have no right to let this fellow go free, who is guilty of attempt at murder according to his own confession, not to speak of my having caught him in the act."

"Yes, yes, I know all that, but do not let us precipitate matters. The whole affair has transpired so unexpectedly I am scarcely able to grasp it. Just imagine for one moment the horror of the situation. There I was sitting and about to drink from a cup filled with deadly poison. I would have been dead by this time had it not been for your fortunate intervention. And such a terrible thing was planned by a man whom I never in my life even harmed with a thought, to be carried out by another man whom I treated in the friendliest manner from the moment I became acquainted with him. That is the person who now stands before us a self-confessed criminal, whose services were purchased by a nobleman, an aristocrat. I was aware the colonel hated me, but if aristocratic hatred is displayed by such villainy as hatching murder and assassination, I am sure all of us ought to be glad we are not aristocrats. However, although you, Fred, caught this man 'red-handed,' as it were, and in spite of the plausibility of his story regarding Colonel Wuesthoff, I propose that we proceed cautiously. After all the whole thing may be nothing but a fabrication of his brain. It may be all untrue what he says about Wuesthoff, and if we caused the colonel's arrest on the mere statements of this pseudo peddler, to have them proved false afterward, I for one would never forgive myself for having wronged the man who was once my superior officer. I tell you what we can do. Let us keep this man under our own personal surveillance until to-morrow, when I will return with him to Mayence. If his allegations are correct he will not object to that. Arrived in Mayence he shall go to Herr von Wuesthoff to claim his reward for having poisoned me. The colonel believing his order to have been carried out, will, of course, hand over to him the prize. With the deed of the property in our possession we will have good evidence against the nobleman."

This plan seemed a very good one to everybody, and even Schirmer agreed to every detail. Frederic, still sus-

picous reserved for himself the privilege of taking charge of the false peddler, and when the latter volunteered to being locked up and tied hand and foot, the ex-soldier remarked:

"That will not be necessary. I know how to handle prisoners without putting them in chains. The best way to hold guard over anybody is to cover him with a loaded gun and never turn your eyes from him."

"And I will stay with you Frederic," broke in Phillip to assist in the performance, and if he then shows any disposition to take "French leave," Karl will have to be satisfied to take his corpse to Mayence."

"Very well then," said Junker, "that being settled, let us go home. I am anxious to go and see my parents. Good by Herr Krebs, much obliged for your kindness."

The three young friends with the Mayence cobbler between them immediately left the "Golden Swan." The distance to Winterthal was but a short walk. There was very little said by either of them the entire way. All seemed to be occupied with their own thoughts. Junker's brain was all in a whirl trying to contemplate the results of the revenge of his former colonel. He congratulated himself upon his good fortune by which the murderous plans of Wuesthoff had been frustrated; and he was forced to smile as he mentally pictured the face of his future brother-in-law in the criminal dock of Mayence, charged with conspiracy to kill him by poison. What humiliation for a man, who had such exceedingly exalted notions of his own importance, his position and his name, to be an accomplice in crime with a miserable, poverty-stricken shoe mender, a cobbler foresooth! Wuesthoff's villany was very convincing evidence, that rascals are found in all classes of society, and that not even the blood of fifty ancestors will afford immunity to anybody from becoming a criminal.

Then Junker began to think and wonder what the old general would say when the news came to his ears, and Helene—but here he was interrupted in his brown study by Philip, saying:

"Well Karl you are near home now. Do you see your mother standing in the door and looking this way?—It is funny about mothers, but I wager, it was her instinct told her to come out. I guess she felt you were near. Look at her, don't she seem just like she did when

you saw her last?—There is that same white muslin cap, the prim calico dress, the large white linen apron, the glasses set in old silver on her nose, that beauty curl in front of each ear. What a nice looking lady she is. I tell you, if she were still single our younger village beauties would have a formidable rival in her—She has recognized you Karl, she is coming down the garden walk.—Good morning Frau Junker, we have brought him back safe and sound.”

Phillip had been rattling away without anyone taking the least notice of his talk. He was a particular favorite of the old lady, who had brought him up, because his own mother died when he was born, and he had been singing the praises of his foster mother ever since he could prattle.

No sooner had Karl noticed his mother on the doorstep when he ran forward. They met at the garden gate. He threw his arms around her neck and kissed her wrinkled cheeks in true childish affection. She, poor lady, all in a flutter with excitement could find no words to express her delight, her heart was overflowing with joy, and she wept. Then the two, mother and son, turned back towards the house, where Herr Junker stood in the door awaiting them.

“Here you are at last Karl. Glad to see you, welcome home!” with this greeting the old man took his son by the hand and gave it a hearty shake.

Frederic and Phillip with their prisoner had thoughtfully remained behind, and the former remarked :

“We had better leave them alone, they have so much to say to each other, we can come back later.” Then he turned to Schirmer: “Now Mr. Peddler you will have to come with us. Your imprisonment commences.”

While they continued their walk through the village the two friends arranged how to take care of their prisoner. It was decided to place him in a room in Frederic’s house, and that one of them must remain with him as guard. The watch to be changed every four hours.

It is but natural, that Karl Junker and his parents should have a great deal to talk about when they once got inside their home. There were many questions to be asked and answered. The mother was solicitous about her boy’s health. She wanted to know all about the food he had, whether he had been well provided with clothes, who sewed his buttons on and who darned his socks. How

many blankets there had been on his bed in the winter, etc., etc. On the other hand Junker senior was more desirous to hear about some of the details of the life in the army. Having been a soldier himself, that was of course interesting to him, especially as it recalled some of the happiest days of his youth. Neither of them, however, asked one word about Fraeulein von Cannstatt. Not that they were not anxious to know, why, they were "just dying" to know all about it, but so delicate were the feelings of these simple-minded country people, they were satisfied to wait until their son was ready to broach the subject first. It was his love affair and they had every confidence in him that whatever there might be in it Karl had been honest.

After awhile the mother had to run away into the kitchen, and then father and son got up to take a walk around the house, the stables, as well as the garden. They interviewed the poultry, the dogs and the pigs, the cows and the horses, and the old man proudly announced to each species of the animal kingdom, that his son, their young master, had come home again.

Dinner being over, the two men strolled through the fields, and Karl thought it a very good opportunity to tell his father he had to go back to Mayence the next day. He related in detail the reason for this and also gave a full account of his relationship with Helene von Cannstatt. Old Junker listened with astonishment, but it was evident from the merry twinkle in his eye, he was not in the least displeased.

"That is quite a romantic love affair of yours, but I have no fault to find, all I ask is be honest about the matter. There is not a time in a man's life when he should be more in earnest, more honest, than at the time he is in love. Whatever your actions may be, their effects not only concern yourself, but you either beautify or else spoil the whole life of another; and remember that the other is a woman. Your mother was from a worldly point of view the poorest girl in this part of the country, but I loved her honestly, and we have always been happy together. Her poverty and my wealth never caused us a moments disagreement, and if you and this lady love each other honestly her wealth and position can no more overwhelm you, than your station humiliate her."

"Thank you father for your kind words, believe me I

shall do nothing, to cause either you or mother one thought of pain. Now, I would like you to tell mother about my having to leave again to-morrow."

"I understand, my boy, you do not like to be your own messenger of such news, so soon after you have come home."

The bedroom has always been a sort of confessional for husband and wife. It is there they tell each other of their sorrows. It is there they share their joys. It is there where are to be found the scenes of the curtain lectures, and it is there the two put their heads together to devise plans for the benefit of the children.

It was in the bedroom where the old German farmer told his 'hausfrau' all about the love affair of their son, where he unfolded to her the danger he had only escaped from that morning. Hence on the following morning when Frau Junker asked him :

"Are you going back this afternoon?" he felt relieved, and smilingly replied :

"This afternoon, mother, but I shall not be gone long, and when I return, I hope to bring you back a daughter as well as a son.

It was after dinner when the same four, Karl, his two friends and Schirmer, who had walked into Winterthal the day before, left together on their return journey to the Golden Swan. It had been decided by Karl's friends, that the moment he was to step into the stage for Cologne, Schirmer should be left in his care, but until then these two proposed to keep their prisoner in their personal charge. They arrived at the famous hostelry long ere the "Post-wagen" was due, and to while away the time all agreed to go into the Bowling alley. The game of bowling is a favorite sport with the young men in that part of Germany, and as Schirmer declared himself to be also an adept at the play, an enjoyable time was looked forward to. The "pins" had already been set up, and they were about to begin the game, when they suddenly heard a noise, as if a detachment of artillery were approaching.

"What is that?" Fredric and Phillip exclaimed simultaneously.

"It must be the stage, ahead of time."

"No, such a thing as the stage ahead of time has never been heard of. Let us go and see, it must be some-

thing out of the ordinary, just listen to the racket. "With the inborn curiosity characteristic of all countryborn people, they had to go and see. The game was abandoned, of course.

In the front of the hotel they found a large fourwheeled carriage, drawn by four fine looking horses in the act of pulling up, while mine host of the Swan came rushing out of the house as well as the rotundity of his person and shortness of breath would permit him.

"The Extra-Post! The Extra-Post!" he shouted.

"The Extra-Post?" asked one of the young men. "Then you must be expecting someone of importance?"

"No, we are not expecting anyone anymore, than that a man keeping a hotel is always looking for guests. The Extra-Post comes at all hours of the day and night.

By this time the vehicle had come to a standstill. In the capacious front set, i-e- the box, were the driver, a young man and a young woman, the last two evidently being servants. They all hurriedly jumped down from their lofty places, and the young man opened the carriage door.

"We are at the Golden Swan, Herr General, half an hour from Winterthal," he was heard to address somebody in the vehicle.

"Why do we not go on then?" was the impatient retort from inside.

"The driver says, he will have to change horses."

"How long will that take him?"

"Ten minutes."

"Very well then, tell him to hasten."

The man disappeared, and the boniface of the Swan strutted with an air of affected importance to the carriage door, where he took off his cap and bowed very ceremoniously. Junker, who had also been watching all that had been going on in front of the hotel, felt an unaccountable interest for these travelers awaken within him. Moved by intuition more than curiosity he was drawn towards the carriage by an invisible power, and soon he found himself looking over the shoulders of the hotel keeper into the vehicle. To his utmost astonishment he recognized the travelers, for he beheld: General von Cannstatt and Helene.

"With a smiling" Guten Tag," and how do you do?" he gently pushed the proprietor of the Swan on one side and raising his hat, again addressed the travelers, who had

been too much surprised at his appearance to be able to answer him.

Helene, however, recovered from her surprise very quickly, and after she had expressed her delight to Junker at seeing him, she turned to her father with the remark:

"There, Papa, did I not tell you we should find Karl alive and well?"

The old nobleman appeared to be still unable to fully realize the young man was actually standing before him, and while he yet endeavored to grasp the fact, Junker, with an expression of astonishment on his face ejaculated:

"But you surely did not think me dead?"

"I did, and what is more I was almost sure of it. We will tell you all about it later on. This is hardly the place.

Will you not come out of the carriage. I am convinced you are tired of being rolled over the rough roads. The Golden Swan is an excellent hotel, and I will see that every comfort is afforded you for a rest after your journey."

It was a welcome invitation to the father and daughter, who were neither accustomed to traveling in a coach, even if it was the Extra-Post; and now, that they had practically achieved the object of their journey, they were glad to leave the carriage. Junker made it his business to see that the two travelers were waited upon hand and foot. When he announced the names of the new guests to the astonished innkeeper, the latter literally fell into the house over the steps, and for the next quarter of an hour orders of all kinds were kept up incessantly among the servants. It was a great day for the Golden Swan when nobility stopped there.

When Herr von Cannstatt and his daughter were comfortably quartered in the best parlor of the hotel, the general gave Karl a detailed account of the reason that had brought them on this journey. During the narration of these facts, the young man's mind was busily occupied listening and trying to find in what he heard a thread to his own experiences.

When the general came to the end of his story, the young man said:

"The infamy of colonel von Wuesthoff astonishes me beyond conception. I know that all this is very painful news to you, but listen to me, and you will see that I am not making such a statement without the most positive

proof. There is no doubt in my mind, I would be dead now, if the machinations of that gentleman had not miscarried."

When Junker had completed a detailed rendering of his experiences since he left Mayence, both father and daughter sat there dumbfounded.

"The dastardly conduct of Wuesthoff fills me with shame and abhorrence," indignantly remarked the general, "and I am at a loss as to what could have possessed him to concoct such a fiendish plan against your life. I am positively horrified at the thought, that this man is the husband of my daughter, and that in my declining years our family has to be so villianously disgraced by one of its members. What pazzles me most is my inability to conceive of a motive Wuesthoff might have had for such a monstrous plot.

"His motive," broke in Helene, "to my mind, does not consist so much in any personal hatred against Karl, as in the absurd notion, that he ought to prevent the formation of any closer relationship between us at all harzards, in order to maintain and uphold the dignity of his aristocratic position. It was a plan conceived by his brain, diseased with the conviction that Karl was a dangerous enemy of the nobility, who must be put out of the way at any cost."

The late member of the Mayence barracks might have thrown some light upon the reasons for Wuesthoff's revenge, which had more foundation in fact, but he nobly refrained from offering further particulars of enlightenment upon the colonel's character.

"Ah, well, let us abandon the subject and be thankful Junker was fortunate enough to meet with such a miraculous escape from a horrible death. I have a plan the details of which I will present to you both some other time, which, if it meets with your views, will open a future for all of us that will transport us from the environments of class and class distinctions into a haven of absolute equality, into a place where a man is esteemed for what he is, for what he has made himself, and not for what others have made him."

"General," smilingly interrupted Karl, "you are describing the country of the millennium."

"No, I am not, but it is the land where the millennium will surely dawn when the rest of the world will still be hovering in darkness and battling with the traditions of former ages. But, apropos, what do you intend to do with

this man from Mayence, who was hired to poison you?"

"Let him go home and claim the reward for the crime he never committed."

"Then you do not propose to enter criminal proceedings against him and Wuesthoff?"

"Certainly not; nothing could induce me to go into court against a relative of Helene's, especially in a case of this nature."

"You are a noble-hearted boy, Junker, and I appreciate the delicacy of your sentiments and consideration."

"It is very kind of you to say so, general, but I believe I am only doing what is right, am I not Helene?"

"Whatever you do it could not be wrong in my opinion!" replied the young lady, coming close to Junker and placing her hand confidently in his, while her eyes looked up at him radiant with the sparkle of unspeakable pride.

"Very well, then, young people," the old nobleman continued the conversation, "let us end our journey to Winterthal. Now we are so close I am anxious to see your parents, Junker. I would like to renew my former acquaintance with your father, and thank your mother for having brought up a boy of whom she has every reason to be proud."

The ex-private was pleased beyond expression when he heard that the general and Helene were to be his guests in his parents' home. Orders for a speedy departure from the Swan were given and promptly carried out. Then Junker went to look for Frederick, and when he informed that young man that circumstances had arisen which made it necessary to let the false peddler go free, this announcement was met with indignant objections. Still in the end Karl prevailed as usual. Then Schirmer was called aside.

"You are at liberty to go where you please," Junker addressed that astonished man. "I know I ought to have you arrested and let the law take its course, but I have come to a different conclusion. After all you were only the tool in the hands of somebody else, and while you are a criminal theoretically, I will let you go on the condition that you return to Mayence, see the colonel and claim the reward promised you in case you were successful."

"I will do exactly as you want me to," replied the cobbler, "and I thank you for your generosity to let me off so easily."

"Do not thank me, man, but thank my friend, who prevented you from becoming a murderer. Good bye."

CHAPTER XXIII.

In order to apprise his parents of the coming guests to the farm, Karl had sent Phillip ahead, and when that young man reached Winterthal with the news, as to who were coming, it is not difficult to imagine the excitement which was produced among the simple village folk by this information. When Phillip had completed his mission at the Junker homestead, he went into the village, and it was not long until the entire population was agog with the interesting announcement that a nobleman and his daughter were coming to Winterthal as the guests of the Junkers, and what was more wonderful, that young Karl was engaged to be married to the lady. It was a startling story, and ere many days had passed it spread throughout the "Bergische Lande," where even to day one can hear the story told with prismatic colorings. That a farmer's son should marry a lady of the nobility, a real countess, forsooth, had never been heard of by even the oldest man or woman in the province, and one cannot be astonished that the effect of such news should be electrifying. For the next month or more, and even after the objects of their curiosity had already departed, Winterthal was the Mecca for all the surrounding towns, hamlets and villages, and the wedding was everywhere spoken of as a new wonder of the world. Those who had been fortunate enough to obtain a glimpse of the bride went away with an expression on their countenances filled with gratification that indicated their earthly ambition had reached its acme.

When Frau Junker received the announcement that Karl had abandoned his journey to Mayence, and was about to return with such important guests, she at once set about getting the house ready for the reception of the visitors. She naturally looked anxiously forward to their coming, wondering all the time what Helene might be like. This suspense, however, was not of very long duration. The party arrived, the formal introductions were gone through, and from the very moment the young countess shook hands with her prospective mother-in-law, supplementing it by the filial salutation of a kiss, the old lady opened her heart

to the young girl and gave her a true mother's love. Frau Junker had expected to meet a proud, haughty, unapproachable lady of lofty air and bearing, such as she had always understood the women of the aristocracy to be, hence her disappointment was of a very pleasant character, for in Helene she found the ideal girl her fond mother's heart had always pictured to herself as the proper wife for her only son.

The old farmer's wife was a good manager and housekeeper, and the guests did not cause her the least inconvenience, nor was there anything wanting to make their stay agreeable. The Junkers were simple, honest people, and in her attentions Frau Junker made no pretensions. She gave them the best her circumstances could afford. That the general and his daughter were pleased with their hosts was evident, the old nobleman remarking to Helene the second day after their arrival:

"I have slept better here than I have done for years, and I am as comfortable as I have ever been in my life."

"It is pleasant to hear you say so, papa," replied Helene, "as for myself I must admit I never was in a more delightful place. I find the air is especially salubrious and invigorating."

They were both greatly attracted by the beautiful garden in the rear of the house, where a summer house, covered with large leaves of a grapevine prevented the penetration of the sun's hot rays, and where the many flowers diffused a delicious fragrance on the balmy breeze. Here they were on a certain afternoon enjoying the hospitality of Frau Junker leisurely sipping tea from the old-fashioned china cups when Karl came in to join them.

"Now that we are all together, Papa!" Helene suddenly turned the conversation from ordinary subjects, "suppose you tell us about your plans for the future so mysteriously hinted at the other day."

"Ah, yes, I may as well, although I had intended to wait a little longer, but I dare say the sooner the matter is unfolded, the sooner shall I know, whether my ideas meet your views. Listen to me then:—Since Wuesthoff has proved himself such a villian, and since my acquaintance with you, Junker, has led me to the discovery, that a man may be a nobleman without possessing the titular appendage of an aristocratic name, I have come to the conclusion,

the social conditions of our country, as they exist to-day are a sham. They are degrading the ruling class and humiliating the people. I am now convinced it is a gross debasement of the human race to permit a certain small number of its members, who by the accident of birth are in a position to enumerate their forefathers by a long string of ancestors, should on that account be allowed privileges and advantages, which others not distinguished in that respect, are to be deprived of. Were the average member of this superior class endowed with qualities, virtues and characteristics of an equally superior order, then I would say there were reasons entitling them to the enjoyment of preferences. But the more I think over this and the oftener I study this point in a dispassionate, unprejudiced manner I am forced to admit the reverse is the case. Born an aristocrat I am ashamed to make this statement."

"Our greatest men in war, in art, in literature in science have been decedents from the people. It is the people, who have made Germany what she is, but the aristocracy has reaped the reward, and what is worse appropriated it without the least show of gratitude. Aristocracy holds itself aloof from those, who have weft the purple, which covers their shoulders. What is more, it is the constant aim of the nobility to maintain that barrier of distinction by every conceivable means. Of course this cannot last forever. The revolution, which has recently swept over Europe was merely the forerunner of the storm, that will some day break loose over this country and demolish these idols of tradition, the heritage of the middle ages. I will not live to see it, even you may have passed away ere the death knell for aristocracy will sound in doleful discord over our fatherland, but it will come."

The general stopped. He seemed to be very much affected by the subject of his remarks. Still he did not appear excited. After awhile he continued:

"There is but one country, where the bane of aristocracy is not known. That country is America. There the social distinctions, of birth, of calling, do not exist. There the code of law that rules the artisan rules with the same vigor over the millionaire. In short my proposition to you both is: Let us go to America, "the land of the free, the home of the brave."

Karl and Helene sat and listened to the general with

astonishment plainly visible on their faces. For some time neither spoke. Junker could scarcely believe his ears. Here were the views, which he had cherished in his ardent soul for years, uttered by a man belonging to that class, who were tacitly recognized as the enemies of such ideas, who branded them as treason. At last he replied :

"The grandeur and nobility of your sentiments on the social equality of man is overwhelming, and although it may not be a compliment to you I must say that I coincide with you exactly. It has been the dream of my life to go to America. Yet under present circumstances I would prefer to have Helene give her decision before I offer my opinion. Whatever she thinks and says expresses my views."

"If Papa wants to leave Germany and you have been wanting to go to America all your life, I shall certainly feel no anxiety to remain behind. Wherever you desire to go there will be my home."

"That being the case," rejoined Herr von Cannstatt, "there is nothing to prevent the speedy consummation of my plans. I am indeed glad you have fallen in with my views so readily ; and now I propose we do not tarry in Europe any longer than is absolutely necessary. To this end of course a great deal will yet have to be done. There is your wedding and a settlement of our affairs before we can leave, but I have thought over all that. To begin with, Junker, I want you to bring me a notary public from the neighborhood, in order that I may legally empower you to represent me and transact business for me. I have decided upon this, because as I told you already, my affairs are very much entangled. I am really too old to attend to these matters myself. Then I am not a good business man, and since you promised to be my business manager I am anxious to see you start in your position. I should judge that this will occupy you about a month, during which period Helene and I, with the kind permission of your parents, will remain here. She will want time to get ready for the wedding, and I am anxious to get a long rest to prepare myself for the coming voyage across the Atlantic ocean. Now, what do you say to an old man's arrangements?"

"They are entirely satisfactory to me," answered Junker, grasping the general's hand with great fervor.

"And to me also, you dear, thoughtful Papa," added the young lady, while she literally showered kisses upon the old nobleman. "And when we get into our new home across the sea I shall make you so happy and comfortable, you will never have time nor inclination to look longingly back to the past."

The general's arrangements were all carried out to the letter. While he wrote personally for his resignation from the army, Karl followed the instructions laid out for him. He had a hard task, but he acquitted himself to the utmost satisfaction of Herr von Cannstatt. He disposed of all the property except the ancestral estate. The latter he left in charge of a trusty agent, who had to render him an accounting every three months. During this business trip Junker had to pass through Mayence. He did not go to see his future brother-in-law, but he had an interview with Schirmer, from whom he learned, that von Wuesthoff had been informed of the mis-carriage of the plan to have him poisoned, but that he had nevertheless given him the deed of his little house, which was now his property.

"I believe he did that," said the cobbler, "to assure himself of my secrecy about the whole affair, in fact, he gave me to understand as much."

In a month Karl returned home, all his commissions completed. The arrangements for the wedding had also been perfected in the meantime under the supervision of Helene and Frau Junker. Although it had been the wishes of the parties directly concerned to have the ceremony conducted in a very quiet manner, the whole village insisted upon participating in the event. Frederic and Phillip of course were prominently connected with the affair, and both seemed to be untiring in their efforts to see that everything went off with the necessary eclat.

On the day succeeding the wedding, General von Cannstatt, Mrs. Karl Junker and the former "Apollo of the Barracks" left their fatherland for America, where they arrived in due time, ready to start a new life, in which, I am pleased to chronicle, they enjoyed much happiness.

The general lived for many years, made happy by his children and grandchildren. Communications from Germany reached them but seldom. Only a year ago they heard that von Wuesthoff had been shot and killed, but who the perpetrator of the deed was, could never be found out,

although there were rumors around the barracks that the bullet had been fired by a private soldier out of revenge for maltreatment, which the young man had suffered at the hands of the colonel.

The lady von Wuesthoff had preceeded her husband to the grave by several years, as the result of an accident while out driving.

Mr. and Mrs. Junker are now residing in one of the large cities in the eastern states. They have been several times in Germany since the general died, but they are always glad when they return to the shores of the United States, and even now they often say to each other :

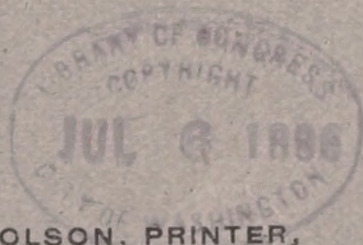
“It was a happy inspiration of the dear General, when he asked us to make our home in this country.”

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